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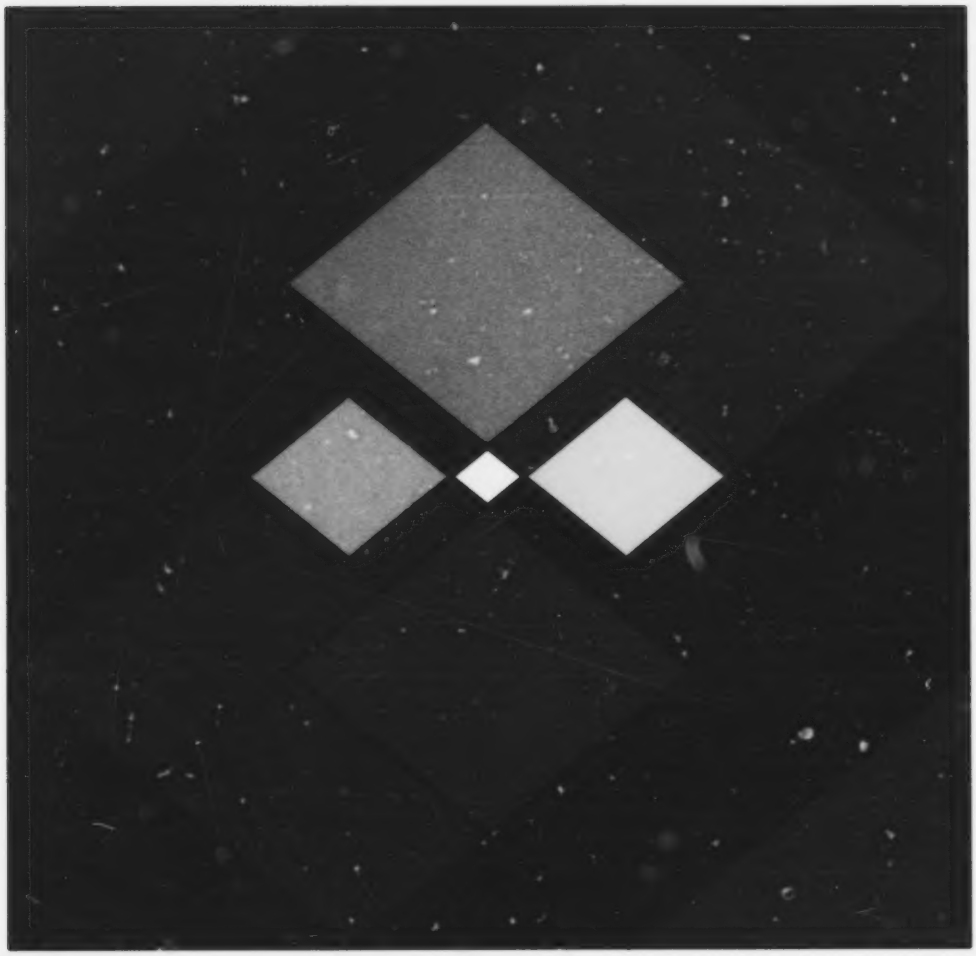
Current Population Reports **Special Studies** Series P–23, No. 162

Studies in Marriage and the Family

Singleness in America
Single Parents and Their Children
Married-Couple Families With Children



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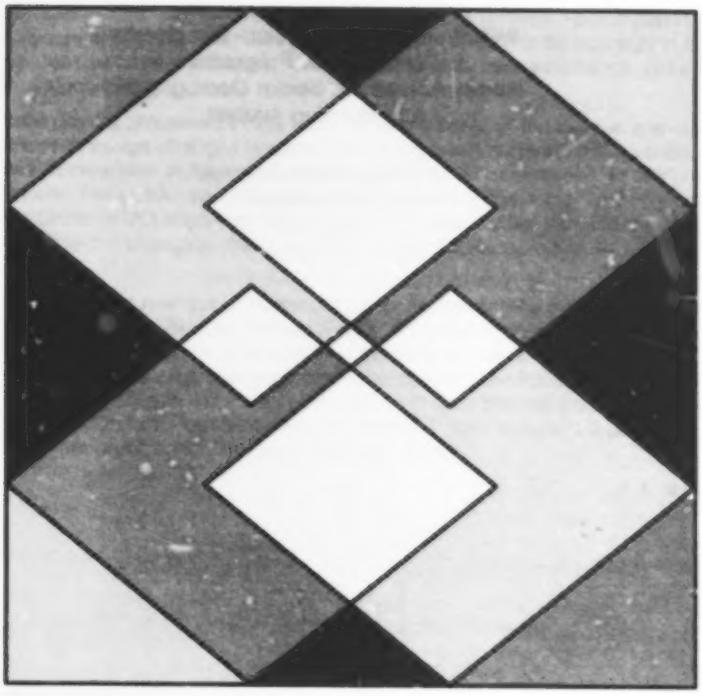
Issued June 1989



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Preface

Recent years have seen important trends exerting an impressive influence on household and family living in the United States. Increases in divorce, remarriage, age at first marriage, labor force participation of women, and delays and declines in childbearing are among the more notable of these trends. In the span of just one generation, these developments—individually and collectively—have helped to dramatically alter the living arrangements of the American people. Today's individual and family life courses involve many more important transitions as people form, dissolve, and re-form households and families. As compared with 20 years ago, today's families are smaller, more likely to be maintained by a single parent, to have multiple earners, to require child care assistance, or to contain stepchildren.

The three papers presented in this report address some of the causes and consequences of recent changes in patterns of living arrangements. Arlene Saluter explores "Singleness in America," and its impact on all generations; in "Single Parents and Their Children," Steve Rawlings discusses the social and economic circumstances of this important family type; and Louisa Miller and Jeanne Moorman examine the changing characteristics of "Married-Couple Families With Children."

This is the first of a new set of subject-specific analyses to be published by the Census Bureau in the Special Studies Series of Current Population Reports. Future reports will present the research of individuals or teams in areas of current interest. They will be organized by broad subject with individual articles focusing on specific trends. Each will analyze and interpret data beyond that typically provided by other Current Population Reports series. Future reports will delve into aspects of geographic mobility, education, and fertility.

A.J. Norton

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Appendix
Source and Reliability of Estimates

Source of Data

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in March or June of years 1960 through 1988 in the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Bureau of the Census conducts the survey every month, although this report uses mostly March and June data for its estimates. Also, some estimates come from 1960 and 1970 decennial census data. The March and June surveys use two sets of questions, the basic CPS and the supplements.

For other sources see the reference lists associated with each section of the report.

Basic CPS. The basic CPS collects primarily labor force data about the civilian noninstitutional population. Interviewers ask questions concerning labor force participation about each member 14 years old and over in every sample household.

The present CPS sample was selected from the 1980 decennial census files with coverage in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. The sample is continually updated to account for new residential construction. It is located in 729 areas comprising 1,973 counties, independent cities, and minor civil divisions. About 59,500 occupied households are eligible for interview every month. Interviewers are unable to obtain interviews at about 2,500 of these units because the occupants are not home after repeated calls or are unavailable for some other reason.

Since the introduction of the CPS, the Bureau of the Census has redesigned the CPS sample several times to improve the quality and reliability of the data and to satisfy changing data needs. The most recent changes were completely implemented in July 1985.

March and June supplements. In addition to the basic CPS questions, interviewers asked supplementary questions, in March, about relationship, marital status and living arrangements, and, in June, about marital history, fertility and birth expectations.

In order to obtain more reliable data for the Hispanic population, the March CPS sample was increased by about 2,500 eligible housing units, interviewed the previous November, that contained at least one sample person of Hispanic origin. In addition, the sample included persons in the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post.

Estimation procedure. This survey's estimation procedure inflates weighted sample results to independent estimates of the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States by age, sex, race and Hispanic/non-Hispanic categories. The independent estimates were based on statistics from decennial censuses of population; statistics on births, deaths, immigration and emigration; and statistics on the size of the Armed Forces. The independent population estimates used for 1980 to present were based on updates to controls established by the 1980 decennial census. Data previous to 1980 were based on independent population estimates from the most recent decennial census. For more details on the change in independent estimates, see the section entitled "Introduction of 1980 Census Population Controls" in an earlier report (Series P-60, No. 133). The estimation procedure for the March supplement included a further adjustment so the husband and wife in a household received the same weight.

The estimates in this report for 1984 through 1988 also employ a revised survey weighting procedure for persons of Hispanic origin. In previous years, weighted sample results were inflated to independent estimates of the noninstitutional population by age, sex, and race. There was no specific control of the survey estimates for the Hispanic population. Since then, the Bureau of the Census developed independent population controls for the Hispanic population by sex and detailed age groups. Revised weighting procedures incorporate these new controls. The independent population estimates include some, but not all, undocumented immigrants.

Divorce rates. Data on divorce rates were obtained from the Vital Statistics Reports published by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

Reliability of Estimates

Since the CPS estimates come from a sample, they may differ from figures from a complete census using the same questionnaires, instructions, and enumerators. A sample survey estimate has two possible types of error: sampling and nonsampling. The accuracy of an estimate depends on both types of error, but the full extent of the nonsampling error is unknown. Consequently, one should be particularly careful when interpreting results based on a relatively small number of cases or on small differences between estimates. The standard errors for CPS estimates primarily indicate the magnitude of sampling error. They also partially measure the effect of some nonsampling errors in responses and enumeration, but do not measure systematic biases in the data. (Bias is the average over all possible samples of the differences between the sample estimates and the desired value.)

Nonsampling variability. Nonsampling errors can be attributed to many sources. These sources include the inability to obtain information about all cases in the sample, definitional difficulties, differences in the interpretation of questions, respondents' inability or unwillingness to provide correct information or to recall information, errors made in data collection such as in recording or coding the data, errors made in processing the data, errors made in estimating values for missing data, and failure to represent all units with the sample (undercoverage).

Singleness in America

by Arlene F. Saluter

Introduction

Over the past two decades, substantial changes have occurred in the marital status and living arrangements of Americans. One of the most notable changes has been an increasing single population with associated changes in living arrangements.

While singleness is usually a temporary or transitory status, a growing proportion of adults are spending a larger portion of their lives in a single status. For young men and women today, it is plausible to assume that approximately 10 percent will never marry in their lifetime. For those who do marry, approximately 50 percent will divorce, and the surviving marriages will eventually end in widowhood.

This paper compares the single population in America today with the single population back to 1970 and earlier. Topics include the increasing proportion of persons who have never married, the rising age at first marriage, the dissolution of marriage through divorce and widowhood, and ways in which singleness affects the changing living arrangements of children, young adults, and the elderly.

The population covered in this paper is generally restricted to single (unmarried) adults age 15 years and over. This group includes persons who are divorced, widowed, or never married. Information on children under 18 years are also included to show how adult singleness is related to the living arrangements of children.

The data presented here are based on the March Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of the Census, unless otherwise stated. The CPS is a survey of approximately 57,000 interviewed households across the 50 States and the District of Columbia. The CPS data pertain to the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States plus the small number of Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post (952,000 in 1988). Additional data were obtained from decennial censuses dating back to 1890. Supplemental data on marriage and divorce rates were obtained from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Rise in Singleness

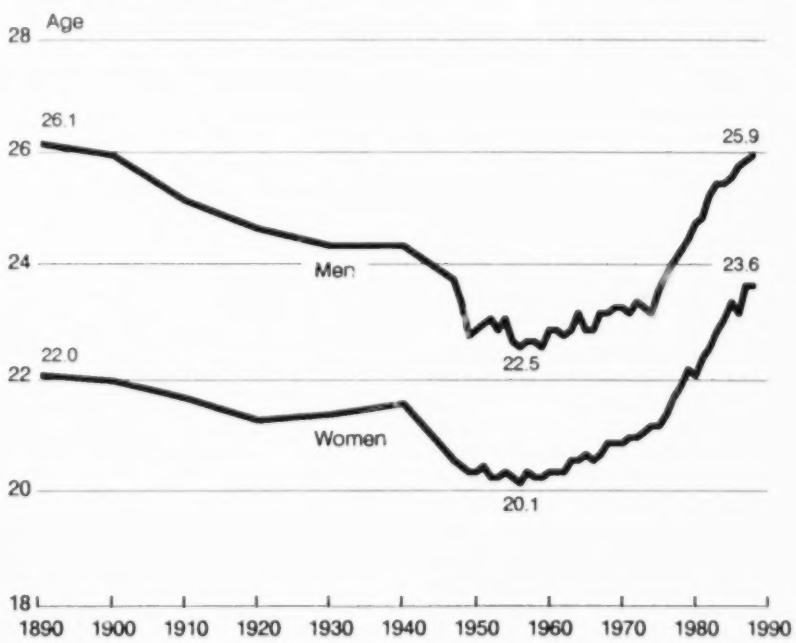
Adults are more likely to be single today than they were in 1970. Young adults are postponing marriage beyond the age at which most persons have married in the past, and young and middle-aged adults are becoming single for the second, third, or fourth time because of divorce. Elderly persons are finding themselves single once more because of the death of their spouse. The single population aged 18 and over rose from 38 million in 1970 (28 percent of all adults) to 66 million in 1988 (37 percent of all adults).

Postponing Marriage

The delay in marriage is reflected in the increase in the proportion of men and women who have not yet married for the first time, the rise in the estimated median age at first marriage, and changes in marriage rates.

Percent never married. The proportion of men and women in their twenties and early thirties who have never married has grown substantially during the past two decades (table A). Six of 10 women and nearly 8 of 10 men aged 20 to 24 had not yet married in 1988, compared with 36 percent and 55 percent, respectively, in 1970. Equally striking is the growth in the proportion of men and women in their late twenties and early thirties who have never married. Between 1970 and 1988, the proportions in the 25–29 age group tripled for women and more than doubled for men. For those in the 30–34 age

Figure 1.
Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to 1988



group, the proportions tripled for both men and women.

The proportion never married is higher for Blacks than for Whites. Three-fourths (75 percent) of Black women in their early twenties had not married in 1988, compared with 59 percent of White women. Among Black women in their late twenties, one-half (50 percent) had not married, compared with 26 percent of White women. The same is true for men, although the differences between the proportions of never-married Black men and White men are not as large as between Black and White women.

Persons of Hispanic origin also had large proportions never married. The proportions for Hispanics were more similar to Whites than Blacks.

While the high proportions of never-married persons in their late twenties and early thirties suggest that many of these persons are postponing their first marriage as compared with earlier cohorts, they also suggest that a higher proportion may never marry.

Age at first marriage. The postponement of first marriage also is reflected in the estimated median and quartile ages at first marriage. Since the mid-1950's, the estimated median age at first marriage has moved upward gradually, increasing by about 3 years for both men and women (table B). Today, men and women are marrying the first time at ages similar to those seen at the turn of the century. For example, the median age at first marriage for men in 1988 is the same as that for men in 1900 (25.9 years (figure 1)). The median age at first marriage for women (23.6 in 1988) has been higher during the 1980's than at any time for which estimates are available. These recent increases in age at first marriage have been relatively greater for women, so the age differences between brides and grooms is reduced.

Similarly, there has been upward movement for women in the first and third quartile ages at first marriage.[1] Of special note in table C are the first and third quartile ages which have increased since 1970 by 1.2 years and 4.6 years, respectively. Currently, one-fourth (first quartile) of the women who marry do so by 20.1 years of age, only slightly higher than the 18.9 years of age in 1970. However, the age by which three-fourths (third quartile) of women have married has moved upward considerably, from 23.3 years to 27.9 years. As a result, the inter-quartile range for women increased by 3.4 years since 1970, which means that

[1] The median and quartile ages at first marriage shown in this report are estimates derived from tabulations of marital status by age for calendar years and may yield figures that differ somewhat from those based on annual vital statistics or on census questions on age at first marriage.

Table A. **Percent Never Married, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1988, 1980 and 1970**

Age	Women			Men		
	1988	1980	1970	1988	1980	1970
All races:						
20 to 24 years	61.1	50.2	35.8	77.7	68.8	54.7
25 to 29 years	29.5	20.9	10.5	43.3	33.1	19.1
30 to 34 years	16.1	9.5	6.2	25.0	15.9	9.4
35 to 39 years	9.0	6.2	5.4	14.0	7.8	7.2
White:						
20 to 24 years	58.5	47.2	34.6	76.1	67.0	54.4
25 to 29 years	26.3	18.3	9.2	41.3	31.4	17.8
30 to 34 years	13.0	8.1	5.5	22.6	14.2	9.2
35 to 39 years	7.5	5.2	4.6	12.8	6.6	6.1
Black:						
20 to 24 years	75.0	68.5	43.5	86.7	79.3	56.1
25 to 29 years	49.6	37.2	18.8	55.0	44.2	28.4
30 to 34 years	36.9	19.0	10.8	42.0	30.0	9.2
35 to 39 years	19.8	12.2	12.1	24.5	18.5	15.8
Hispanic[1]:						
20 to 24 years	52.7	42.8	33.4	72.5	61.8	49.9
25 to 29 years	26.9	22.5	13.7	39.3	28.9	19.4
30 to 34 years	16.7	11.2	8.4	27.9	12.1	11.0
35 to 39 years	9.9	6.6	6.9	12.1	5.8	7.6

[1] Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table B. **Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to 1988**

Year	Men	Women	Year	Men	Women
1988	25.9	23.6	1955	22.6	20.2
			1950	22.8	20.3
1985	25.5	23.3	1940	24.3	21.5
1980	24.7	22.0	1930	24.3	21.3
1975	23.5	21.1	1920	24.6	21.2
1970	23.2	20.8	1910	25.1	21.6
1965	22.8	20.6	1900	25.9	21.9
1960	22.8	20.3	1890	26.1	22.0

Note: A standard error of 0.1 years is appropriate to measure sampling variability for any of the above median ages at first marriage, based on Current Population Survey data.

marriage is becoming a less age-concentrated event.

Estimated quartile ages at first marriage for White and Black women differ. In 1970 (the first year for which these statistics are available for Blacks), the first and second (median) quartiles for White and Black women were very similar (table C). By 1980, differences between Whites and Blacks in the first quartile were still small, but the median and third quartile ages were rising faster for Black women than for White women. By 1985, the estimated median age at first marriage had reached its highest level for Black women (27.0 years) and then declined to 26.0 years in 1988. The median age for White women, however, has continued a gradual rise to a high of 23.3 years in 1988 — still 3 years below the median age at first marriage for Black women. Third quartile ages reached 27.2 years for White women in 1985, compared with 33.0 years for Black women.

Marriage rates. The total number of marriages in the United States reached an all-time high in 1984 (2,477,192), but dropped 3 percent in 1985 (2,412,625). The marriage rate based on eligible unmarried females reached a record low level in 1985: 57.0 marriages per 1,000 unmarried females aged 15 and over, compared with the high of 118.1 in 1946.

Most States report detailed marriage statistics such as age and previous marital history. These States make up the Marriage Registration Area (MRA).[2] Of the 1,858,783 marriages that took place in 1985 in the MRA, about two-thirds were first marriages and one-third were remarriages. Of these first marriages, 10 percent were to women age 30 to 44 years, compared with 6 percent in 1980 and 4 percent in 1970 (NCHS, 1988a).

If age-specific marriage rates remain constant, a never-married woman who is 30 years of age will have a 52-percent chance of marrying by age 65.

[2] In 1985, the MRA consisted of the District of Columbia, and all States except Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington.

Table C. **Quartile Ages at First Marriage for Women, by Race: 1970 to 1988**

Year	Quartiles			Interquartile range
	First	Second (median)	Third	
All women:				
1988	20.1	23.6	27.9	7.8
1985	20.0	23.3	27.2	7.2
1980	19.4	22.0	26.2	6.8
1975	19.0	21.1	24.4	5.4
1970	18.9	20.8	23.3	4.4
White women:				
1988	20.0	23.3	27.2	7.2
1985	19.8	22.8	26.8	7.0
1980	19.2	21.6	25.7	6.5
1975	18.9	21.1	23.9	5.0
1970	18.8	21.1	23.1	4.3
Black women:				
1988	21.0	26.0	(NA)	(NA)
1985	21.4	27.0	33.0	11.6
1980	20.5	24.7	29.7	9.2
1975	19.4	21.3	27.1	7.7
1970	19.1	21.3	25.4	6.3

NA Not available.

For women who have not married by age 40, the probability of marriage by age 65 is 23 percent (Moorman, 1987). Regardless of current marital status, it is estimated that 90 percent of all women will marry at some point in their lives (Norton and Moorman, 1987).

Dissolution of Marriage

Another way in which adults become single is marital dissolution through divorce and widowhood. Divorce is most common among younger and middle-aged adults, while widowhood is most common among elderly women.

Divorce. In 1988, 10.1 percent (14 million) of all adults who had ever been married were divorced; in 1970, the figures were 3.8 percent and 4.3 million. These people had divorced but had not remarried as of the time the survey was conducted. These statistics do not indicate the number of divorces granted in a given year, nor the number of persons who had ever divorced during their lifetime.

The ratio of divorced persons to the number of persons in intact marriages is a useful index for monitoring the increase in divorce (table D). For example, in 1988 there were 13,968,000 divorced persons, compared with 105,226,000 persons married and living with their spouse, yielding a divorce ratio of 133 per 1,000. This ratio is up from 100 per 1,000 in 1980 and 47 per 1,000 in 1970.

Men have lower divorce ratios than women (110 per 1,000 for men, compared with 156 per 1,000 for women in 1988) largely because of the higher incidence of remarriage for divorced men than for divorced women. Blacks have higher ratios than Whites (263 per 1,000 versus 124 per 1,000, respectively), and Hispanics, who may be of any race, had a divorce ratio of 137 per 1,000 in 1988.

The divorce ratio is affected by the incidence of both divorce and remarriage. For instance, in 1985 there were 1,190,000 divorces granted, adding about 2.4 million to the count of cur-

rently divorced persons. However, in that same year about 1.2 million divorced persons remarried. (About 31 percent of the brides in 1985 were previously divorced; this was virtually the same proportion as that for grooms.) (NCHS, 1988a) Thus, the 1.2 million persons who remarried during the year are subtracted from the 2.4 million who divorced during the year, resulting in a net increase of 1,228,000 divorced persons in 1985. The divorce ratio has continued to increase during recent years, because the total number of divorced persons has continued to increase more rapidly than the total number of married persons. It is estimated that between 70 and 75 percent of divorced persons will remarry. For those who remarry, the median interval between divorce and remarriage is about 2 years (Norton and Moorman, 1987).

The annual divorce rate published by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) differs from the divorce ratio in that the divorce rate is the number of divorces that are granted in a given year per 1,000 population. In 1985, the divorce rate was 5.0 per 1,000 total population, compared with 3.5 per 1,000 in 1970. The rate per 1,000 married women, which represents the population at risk of divorce, was 21.7, meaning that more than 2 percent of American wives divorced in 1985. In 1970, the divorce rate for married women was 14.9. The record high divorce rate for married women was in 1979, when the rate reached 22.8. After 1979, the rate declined until 1983 and has since been rising again. If current divorce levels persist, approximately one-half of all recent marriages (marriages occurring within the past 15 to 20 years) will eventually end in divorce (Norton, 1982).

Divorce increased greatly during the 1960's and 1970's. By 1985, 23 percent of the ever-married population in the United States had experienced a divorce. This includes not only the young adults who most commonly experience divorce, but also the elderly whose marriage survived many years. Among ever-married women aged 40 to 44 in 1985, 32 percent had been divorced at some time, compared with a much smaller 18 percent in 1970. The mean age at divorce in 1985 was 33.7 years old for the wife and 34.4 years old for the husband (NCHS, 1987).

Table D. **Divorced Persons per 1,000 Married Persons With Spouse Present, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1988, 1980, 1970, and 1960**

Year and sex	Total	White	Black	Hispanic[1]
Both sexes:				
1988	133	124	263	137
1980	100	92	203	98
1970	47	44	83	61
1960	35	33	62	(NA)
Male:				
1988	110	102	216	106
1980	79	74	149	64
1970	35	32	62	40
1960	28	27	45	(NA)
Female:				
1988	156	146	311	167
1980	120	110	258	132
1970	60	56	104	81
1960	42	38	78	(NA)

NA Not available.
[1]Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.
Source of 1970 data for Hispanic: 1970 Census of Population, Vol. II, 1C, *Persons of Spanish Origin.*
Source of 1960 data for Black: 1960 Census of Population, Vol. II, 1C, *Nonwhite Population by Race.*

Teenage marriages have the highest risk of divorce (table E). Among women who married before age 20, 32 percent had divorced as of 1985, up from 20 percent in 1970. Women who married at later ages have more stable marriages, although the proportion who had divorced has also risen. Between 1970 and 1985, the proportion who had divorced by the survey date rose from 11 to 18 percent for women married at age 20 to 24 years, from 9 to 14 percent for women married at age 25 to 29 years, and from 9 to 12 percent for women married at age 30 or older (Norton and Moorman, 1987).

Widowhood. Widowhood is the single status experienced most often by elderly women and is more likely to be a permanent one for women than for men. In 1988, there were 11.2 million widows and 2.3 million widowers in the United States (excluding persons in nursing homes and other institutions); 72 percent of them were 65 years old or over. However, of all men age 65 years and over, 14 percent were currently widowed as compared with 49 percent of women.

Data from the 1985 June CPS Marital History Supplement show that among ever-married women age 65 or older at the time of the survey, 51 percent had been widowed after their first marriage, compared with 19 percent for men. Only 18 percent of these widowed women had remarried by the survey

Table E. **Percent of Women Divorced After First Marriage, by Age at First Marriage: 1970 and 1985**

Age at first marriage	1985	1970
Total	23.2	14.2
Under 20 years	32.4	19.6
20 to 24 years	18.2	10.9
25 to 29 years	13.6	9.2
30 years and over	11.6	9.1

date, compared with 41 percent for men. While widowhood is less common to persons under age 65, the chance of remarriage is greater, particularly for men. Among ever-married persons under 65 years old in 1985, only 2 percent of the men and 6 percent of the women had been widowed after their first marriage. Of these, 59 percent of the men had remarried, compared with 33 percent of the women.

Women tend to live longer than men. The estimated average length of life in the United States as of 1986 was 71.3 years for men and 78.3 years for women (NCHS, 1988d). Among men who survive to at least age 65, most are married, while women surviving to that age are more likely to be widowed (49 percent were widowed and 41 percent were married in 1988). Thus, the ratio of single men to single women in the older age group is very low, making chances of remarriage for older women correspondingly low.

Ratio of men to women. The ratio of unmarried men to unmarried women, by age, suggests that the marriage prospects are better for younger women than for older women (figure 2). Overall, in 1988 there were about 4 unmarried men for every 5 unmarried women. However, the ratio was much lower for persons 40 years of age and older than it was for persons under 40 years of age. In fact, the largest ratio of unmarried men to unmarried women was for the age groups 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 years (127 and 121 unmarried men for every 100 unmarried women, respectively).

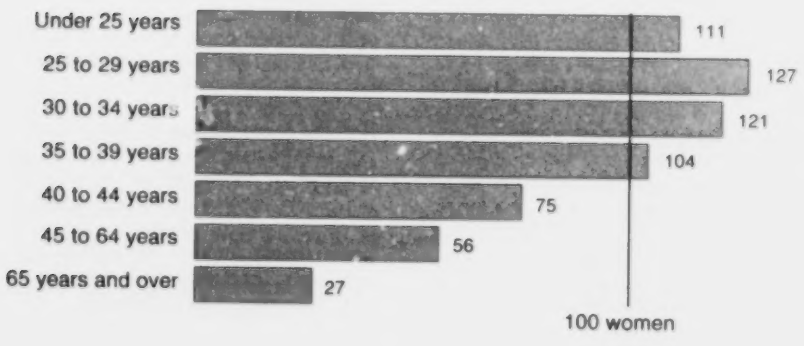
Singleness and the Living Arrangements of Children, Young Adults, and the Elderly

The rise in singleness in America has affected the living arrangements of all age groups, but in different ways. For example, the effects upon young children differ from those of young adults, and middle-aged divorcees are affected differently than elderly widows.

Children

Children are not included among the single population. They are, however, greatly affected by the rise in adult singleness and are, therefore, included in this analysis. As increases occur in divorce and in the proportion of never-married adults who bear children, a smaller proportion of children are living with two parents. The proportion living with a single parent has doubled since 1970.

Figure 2.
Ratio of Unmarried Men per 100 Unmarried Women: 1988



Presence of parents. Out of 63.2 million children under age 18 in 1988, 15.3 million (24 percent) lived with a single parent, compared with 8.2 million (12 percent) in 1970. Black children had the highest proportion living with a single parent in 1988, 54 percent versus 19 percent for White children and 30 percent for Hispanic children. Divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing are the main reasons that children live in single-parent situations. In 1988, 5.9 million children were living with a divorced parent and 4.7 million with a parent who had never married. These statistics reflect the child's current living arrangement and do not include the children who previously lived with one parent but whose parent has since (re)married. An estimated 60 percent of children born this year will spend some portion of their childhood in a one-parent situation (Norton and Glick, 1986).

Parental divorce. The number of children currently living with a divorced parent rose from 2.5 million in 1970 to 5.9 million 1988. They account for the largest proportion of children in a one-parent situation (38 percent in 1988). Among White children, one-half of those living with one parent lived with a divorced parent compared with 17 percent for Black children, and 30 percent for Hispanic children.

About one-half (53 percent in 1985) of all divorces involve one or more children. In each year since 1972, over 1 million children have been involved in divorce. The highest figure recorded was in 1979 (1,181,000 children), and the number has fluctuated toward a slightly lower figure since then. In 1985, the estimated number of children involved in divorces and annulments was 1,091,000, or an average of 0.92 children per decree (NCHS, 1987).

Premarital childbearing. In 1988, 4.7 million children lived with a parent who had never married, up from 557,000 in 1970. To be sure, this is a striking increase over a relatively short span of years. Most of this increase occurred

during the 1980's, and may have resulted in part from a procedural change in the Census Bureau's data collection and processing scheme in 1982–83. This procedural change helped to identify parent-child subfamilies that might otherwise have been overlooked.[3] Nevertheless, the percentage of children living with a never-married parent was increasing both prior to and following the procedural change. (See table F.) The proportion rose from 7 percent to 15 percent between 1970 and 1981, then to 24 percent by 1983 (reflecting both actual increase and increase from procedural change), and to 31 percent by 1988. At least two-thirds of the measured increase between 1981 and 1983 resulted from the improvement in data collection and processing.

Table F. **Proportion of Children in Single-Parent Situations: 1970, 1975, and 1980-88**

Year	Children living with a—	
	Divorced parent	Never-married parent
1970	30.2	6.8
1975	35.9	10.7
1980	42.4	14.6
1981	43.8	15.2
1982 *	42.0	21.0
1983 **	42.0	24.0
1984	41.9	24.0
1985	41.2	25.7
1986	41.6	26.6
1987	40.7	28.5
1988	38.3	30.5

* Partial implementation of processing change.
** Full implementation of processing change.

Among never-married women aged 18 to 24 in 1987, 14 percent had borne a child. (The proportion for all women in that age group was 28 percent.) Of those who had not completed high school, 34 percent had borne a child (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988).

Childbearing among unmarried women has reached the highest levels ever recorded in the United States. Births to unmarried mothers totaled 878,477 in 1986, or a rate of 34.3 births per 1,000 unmarried women age 15 to 44 years. The rate for Black women is substantially higher than that for White women (80.9 per 1,000 versus 23.2 per 1,000, respectively). However, the rate has been increasing faster for White women than for Black women in recent years (NCHS, 1988c).

Income by presence of parents. Children living with a single parent tend to have lower family incomes than children living with married parents. Children living with their single mother have lower family incomes than children living with their single father. The average family income in 1988 for children under 18 living with their mother only was $11,989, compared with $23,919 for those living with their father only, and $40,067 for those living with both parents. That is, the average family income among children living with only their mother was about half that among children who lived only with their father and about 30 percent that of children living with both parents.

Based on statistics collected in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) between January and April 1985, about 4.0 million women received child support with the average level of payment reported to be approximately $2,550. The child support payment represented about 11 percent of the family income of these women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988b).

Young Adults

The rise in singleness among young adults is associated with various demographic and economic factors such as education, income, and housing costs. In some cases, those factors may cause young adults to live with their parents, as opposed to maintaining their own separate households.

Table G. **Living Arrangements of 18- to 24-Year-Olds, by Sex: 1988, 1980, and 1970**

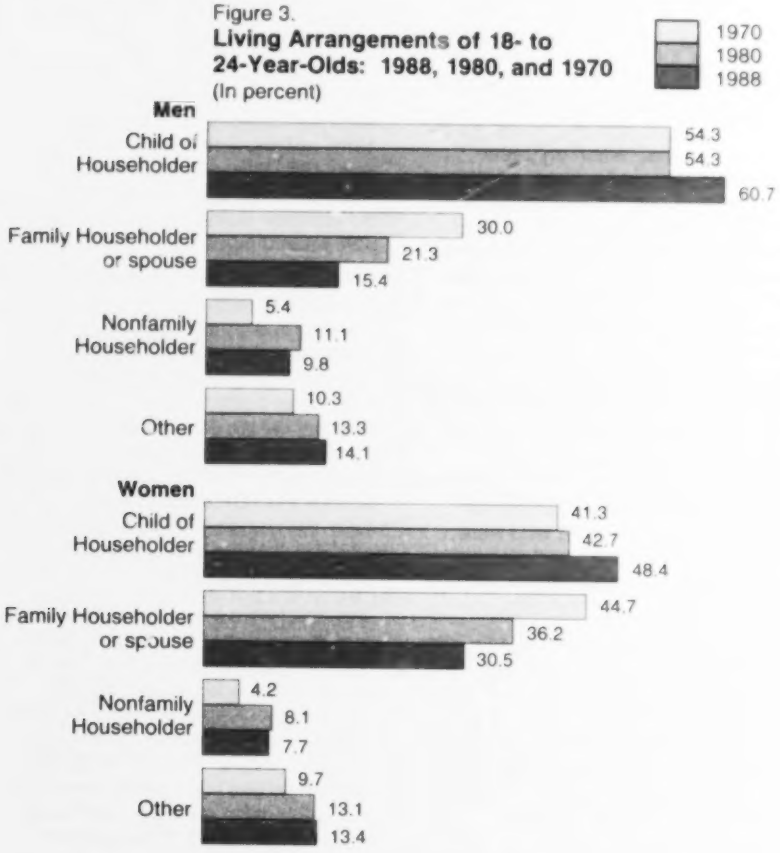
(Numbers in thousands)

Living arrangement				Percent distribution		
	1988	1980	1970	1988	1980	1970
Total	26,061	29,122	22,357	100.0	100.0	100.0
Child of householder*	14,190	14,091	10,582	54.4	48.4	47.3
Family householder or spouse	6,009	8,408	8,470	23.1	28.9	37.9
Nonfamily householder	2,275	2,776	1,066	8.7	9.5	4.8
Other	3,587	3,848	2,239	13.8	13.2	10.0
Male	12,835	14,278	10,398	100.0	100.0	100.0
Child of householder*	7,792	7,755	5,641	60.7	54.3	54.3
Family householder or spouse	1,976	3,041	3,119	15.4	21.3	30.0
Nonfamily householder	1,253	1,581	563	9.8	11.1	5.4
Other	1,814	1,902	1,075	14.1	13.3	10.3
Female	13,226	14,844	11,959	100.0	100.0	100.0
Child of householder*	6,398	6,336	4,941	48.4	42.7	41.3
Family householder or spouse	4,033	5,367	5,351	30.5	36.2	44.7
Nonfamily householder	1,022	1,195	503	7.7	8.1	4.2
Other	1,773	1,946	1,164	13.4	13.1	9.7

* Child of householder includes unmarried college students living in dormitories (1.9 million in 1988).
Source of 1970 and 1980 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-2-4B, *Living Arrangements of Children and Adults*, table 4; 1970 Census of Population, PC(2)-4B, *Persons by Family Characteristics*, table 2, excluding inmates of institutions and military in barracks.

[3] For a more detailed discussion of the procedural change, see Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 399, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1984*, pg. 8.

Figure 3.
Living Arrangements of 18- to 24-Year-Olds: 1988, 1980, and 1970
(In percent)



Living with their parents. Young adults aged 18 to 24 in 1988 were less likely than young adults in 1970 to be maintaining homes of their own and more likely to be living in the homes of their parents. Most of this change has occurred during the 1980's (table G and figure 3) and largely illustrates the shift away from maintaining a family of one's own at a young age rather than a shift away from living independently of parents. The proportion of young adults that were maintaining their own homes dropped from 43 percent in 1970 to 32 percent in 1988. The proportion living with their parents remained relatively constant between 1970 and 1980 (47 and 48 percent, respectively), but then increased to 54 percent by 1988.

Postponement of first marriage is a major factor in the increase in the proportion of young adults living at home. The estimated median age at first marriage is higher for men than for women, and this coincides with the higher proportion of men than of women who live with their parents (61 and 48 percent, respectively). Based on data from the June 1985 CPS, around 70 percent of never-married persons aged 18 to 24 lived in the home of their parents, compared with about 3 percent of currently married persons. Among those whose marriage had been disrupted, about 31 percent had returned to the home of their parents (Bianchi, 1987).

Young adults' pursuit of advanced education may add to the desirability of living with parents, because living expenses while in school may be paid by the parents. For the purpose of this analysis, college students living in dormitories were considered to be living with their parents on the assumption that parents were providing most of the economic support for these students.

Changes in college enrollment for women appear to be more closely related to changes in the proportion living with their parents than are changes in college enrollment for men. For civilian women aged 18 to 24, college enrollment rose from 20 to 25 percent between 1970 and 1980, and then to 28 percent in 1986 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988d). The comparable proportions of all women living with their parents were 41, 43, and 47 percent, respectively. The proportion of civilian males aged 18 to 24 enrolled in college declined from 32 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 1980, while the proportion living with their parents remained unchanged at 54 percent in 1970 and 1980. By 1986, college enrollment among men had risen 2 percentage points to 28 percent, while the proportion living with parents rose 5 percentage points to 59 percent. Of the 14.2 million men and women 18 to 24 years old who lived with their parents in 1988, only 1.9 million were actually living in college dorms (unpublished data from the October supplement to the CPS).

Another factor that may account for the rise in the proportion of young adults living with their parents is the increase in housing costs (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989c) relative to the increase in before-tax income (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989b). (See table H.) In

1980, the average monthly income[4] of 18- to 24-year-olds with income was $539. At that time, monthly median gross rent was $241—45 percent of the average income, and median owner housing cost was $367—or 68 percent of the average income.

Table H. **Mean Income of 18- to 24-Year-Olds, by Marital Status and Housing Costs: 1980, 1985, and 1987**

Characteristic	1987	1985	1980
MEAN INCOME			
Total annual	$8,327	$7,670	$6,467
Never married	7,718	7,046	5,821
Married	10,324	9,407	7,909
Widowed	(*)	(*)	(*)
Divorced	9,492	8,812	7,622
Total monthly[1]	$694	$639	$539
Never married	643	587	485
Married	860	784	659
Widowed	(*)	(*)	(*)
Divorced	791	734	635
HOUSING COSTS			
Gross rent**	(NA)	$365	$243
Gross owner costs***	(NA)	566	366

NA Not available.
* Numbers were too small to calculate a mean.
** Specified renter-occupied housing units.
*** Specified owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage.
[1]Annual income divided by 12.

By 1985, the average monthly income had risen to $639, but this increase did not keep pace with the increase in housing costs. The 1985 median gross rent (the most recent year for which housing costs are available) was equal to 57 percent of 1985 income, and the owner costs were equal to 89 percent.

The income of persons 18 to 24 is lowest for those who have never married; in 1987, the average monthly income for never-married 18- to 24-year-olds with income was $643, compared with $860 for married persons, and $791 for divorced persons of the same age group. Only 29 percent of the never-married civilian income recipients are year-round, full-time workers (which may account for the low income figures), compared with 45 percent for married persons and 38 percent for divorced persons. When only year-round, full-time workers are considered, the average monthly income jumps to $1,166 for never-married persons, $1,298 for married persons, and $1,180 for divorced persons.[5] Thus, the gap between the marital status categories is substantially smaller for full-time workers.

About 95 percent of young adults living at home have never married (based on the 1980 census), and many presumably have no income or low income, and work only part-time. The percentage of the civilian non-institutional population aged 18 to 24 who were employed in 1987 was 63.0 percent; not different from the 1980 percentage of 63.2.

Living on their own. Young adults who do not live with their parents may have one of several different types of living arrangements: they may maintain their own family household (with or without a spouse), they may live alone, or they may share a household with a person or persons not related to them.

In 1988, 6 million 18- to 24-year-olds maintained families as either the householder (one of the persons in whose name the home is owned or rented) or the householder's spouse. This represented 23 percent of all persons in the age group, down significantly from 1980 (29 percent) and 1970 (38 percent). Of the 2.9 million families in 1988 maintained by a person 18 to 24 years old, 62 percent were married-couple families, of whom about half had children present. The remaining 38 percent of families were maintained by someone with no spouse present, and roughly three-fourths had children living in the household.[6]

Young adults who lived alone or who shared their household with an unrelated adult numbered 2.3 million in 1988, or 9 percent of persons 18 to 24 years old. This proportion has not changed since 1980 (9 percent), but it did increase during the 1970's (from 4 percent to 9 percent).

One of the living arrangements that has increased in recent years is the number of unmarried-couple households (table I). Between 1970 and 1988, the total number of such households rose from 523,000 to 2,588,000. The Census Bureau defines an unmarried-couple household as one comprising two unrelated adults of the opposite sex, with or without children under 15 years old living in the household.[7] About 7 of 10 unmarried-couple households had no children present in 1988.

This alternative living arrangement is used by singles of all ages. In 1988, one-fourth of the adults in unmarried-couple households were under 25 years of age, 43 percent were 25 to 34 years old, and 17 percent were 35 to 44 years of age. The majority (53 percent) of partners had never been married, 34 percent were divorced, 5 percent widowed, and 7 percent were separated from their spouse.

Some of the increase in unmarried-couple households may be related to the Baby Boom reaching their twenties and thirties, as well as to the increase in

[4] Average monthly income, shown here, is average annual income divided by 12 months.

[5] There was no significant difference between the average monthly income of never-married and divorced full-time, year-round workers.

[6] A family contains two or more persons (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Therefore, the one-third of families with no spouse or child present had another relative present, such as a brother, parent, niece, etc.

[7] Although the unmarried-couple household figure is intended mainly to identify cohabitating couples, and presumably does in most cases, it also may include those with a tenant or employee living in the household. The estimate, in turn, misses other cohabitating couples who have additional adults present in the household.

Table I. **Unmarried-Couple Households, by Presence of Children: 1970 to 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Total	Without children under 15 years	With children under 15 years
1988	2,588	1,796	802
1980	1,589	1,159	431
1970	523	327	196

Source of 1970 data: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(2)-4B, *Persons by Family Characteristics*, table 11.

sexual freedom among adolescents and unmarried adults. It is estimated that about 60 percent of cohabitating couples eventually marry, but recent research suggests these marriages are less stable than marriages formed with no prior cohabitation (Bumpass). Of the couples who do not marry, the average duration of the relationship is about 18 months (Tanfer, 1987). Cohabitation does not appear to be a replacement for marriage, but it can act to prolong the single status.

The Elderly

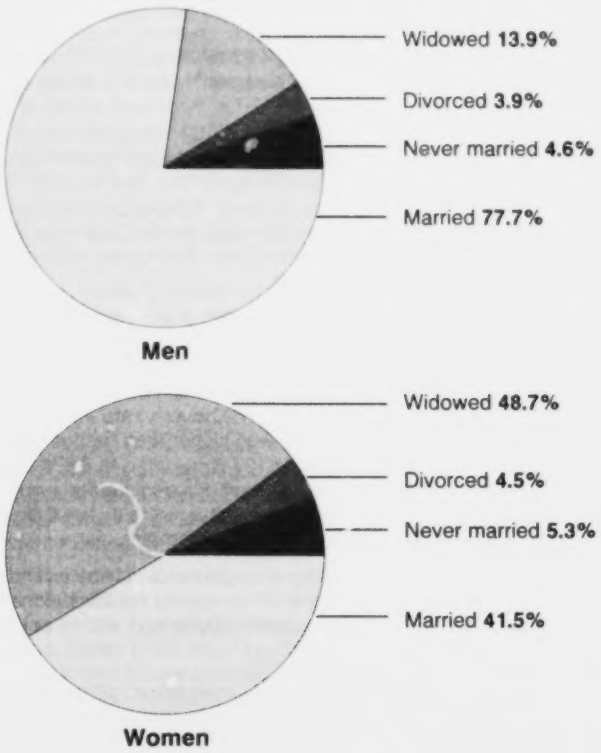
In 1987, there were 29.8 million persons 65 years and older in the United States (based on the July 1 estimate which includes institutional population); the majority of them were women (59 percent). The elderly population has been increasing over the years and is projected to continue to increase as the Baby Boom ages and as life expectancy increases. Most singleness among the elderly is due to widowhood.

Growing elderly population. The population 65 years and over has been steadily increasing in number and in proportion to the total population. Between 1970 and 1987 the number rose from 20.1 million to 29.8 million, and the proportion increased from 10 percent of the total population to 12 percent. Projections to the year 2080 suggest that the elderly may reach 72 million and account for 25 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989d). A smaller portion of the Black than of the White population is elderly. In 1987, 8 percent of all Blacks were 65 and over, compared with 13 percent of all Whites.

Life expectancy has risen for both sexes, but on average, women continue to live longer than men. The estimated average length of life for men rose from 67.1 years in 1970 to 71.3 years in 1986. For women, the corresponding increase was from 74.7 to 78.3 years. The average life expectancy for Blacks is lower than that for Whites: for Black men in 1986 it was 65.2, compared with 72.0 for White men, and the averages for women were 73.5 and 78.8, respectively. (NCHS, 1988d).

Marital status. Of the 11.8 million men 65 years and over in 1988, over three-fourths (78 percent) were currently married, 14 percent were widowed, 4 percent divorced, and 5 percent had never married (figure 4). Of the 16.7 million women, only 41 percent were currently married, 49 percent were widowed, 5 percent divorced, and 5 percent never-married. The ratio of unmarried men to unmarried women in this age group was 27 men per 100 women.

Figure 4.
Marital Status of Persons 65 Years and Over, by Sex: 1988



Men are less likely to be widowed but are far more likely to have remarried after widowhood than their female counterparts. Of the ever-married men 65 years and over in 1985, 19 percent had been widowed after their first marriage, compared with 51 percent for women. As of the survey date, 41 percent of these widowed men had remarried, compared with only 18 percent of the widowed women. Of all persons who married during 1985, only 1 percent of the women and 2 percent of the men were age 65 or older. Of all persons who were marrying for the second time or more in 1985, 3 percent of the women and 5 percent of the men were 65 years or older (NCHS, 1988a).

Income and poverty status. The median income of the elderly has been rising. Between 1980 and 1987 the median income (in 1987 dollars) of persons 65 years and over with income rose from $10,127 to $11,854 for men and from $5,829 to $6,734 for women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989b). The median income of the single elderly is lower than that for the married elderly. In 1987, the median income of married persons 65 years and over was $9,200, compared with $7,911 for divorced persons and $7,731 for widowed persons.[8] Elderly women, by marital status, had lower personal income than elderly men, although the income of divorced women was not significantly lower than that for divorced men (table J). Married women had the lowest median income, but were likely to benefit from the income of their spouse.

Table J. **Economic Characteristics of the Elderly, by Sex and Marital Status: 1987**

(Persons 65 years and over)

Characteristic	Men	Women
MEDIAN INCOME		
Total	$11,854	$6,734
Married, spouse present	12,666	5,485
Married, spouse absent	9,010	6,271
Never married	9,436	8,261
Widowed	9,509	7,432
Divorced	8,422	7,567
POVERTY RATE		
Total	8.5	14.9
Married, spouse present	5.9	5.7
Married, spouse absent	17.1	35.2
Never married	17.7	23.3
Widowed	14.6	20.0
Divorced	19.1	23.9

The proportion of elderly persons with incomes below the poverty level declined from 15.7 in 1980 to 12.2 in 1987 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989e). The poverty rate for the single elderly was higher than for the married elderly (19.9 compared to 6.6 in 1986), and the rates for single elderly women, by marital status, were higher than for their male counterparts.

Living arrangements. Living arrangements of the elderly noninstitutional population vary by age and by sex (table K). For persons 65 to 74 years of age in 1988, the majority (64 percent) of persons were married and living with their spouse, one-fourth lived alone, and 10 percent lived with other relatives. For persons 75 years and older, one-half were widowed, thus, a larger proportion lived alone (40 percent) or with other relatives (17 percent).

The living arrangements of men vary only slightly across the two elderly age groups, while significant differences exist for women. Among elderly men in 1988, the majority lived with their wives (80 percent for 65- to 74-year-olds and 67 percent for those 75 and over), and the next largest proportion lived alone (13 and 22 percent, respectively). Elderly women, in contrast, are less likely to be living with their spouses, because of their longer life expectancy and the lower rates of remarriage after they are widowed. As a result, they are more likely to live alone or with another relative. One-half of women 65 to 74 years old lived with their husbands in 1988; by age 75 or older, the proportion declined to one-fourth. The proportion who lived alone

Table K. **Living Arrangements of the Elderly: 1988, 1980, and 1970**

(Noninstitutional population. Numbers in thousands)

Living arrangement and age	1988			1980	1970	Percent distribution		
	Total	Men	Women			1988	1980	1970
65 years and over	28,527	11,837	16,691	24,194	19,061	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living:								
Alone	8,684	1,913	6,770	7,328	5,071	30.4	30.3	26.6
With spouse	15,543	8,891	6,653	12,965	9,738	54.5	53.6	51.1
With other relatives	3,652	788	2,865	3,402	3,606	12.8	14.1	18.9
With nonrelatives only	648	245	403	499	646	2.3	2.1	3.4
65 to 74 years	17,472	7,736	9,736	15,293	12,093	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living:								
Alone	4,243	1,014	3,229	3,851	2,815	24.3	25.2	23.3
With spouse	11,161	6,152	5,010	9,474	7,086	63.9	61.9	58.6
With other relatives	1,747	412	1,334	1,661	1,780	10.0	10.9	14.7
With nonrelatives only	321	158	163	307	412	1.8	2.0	3.4
75 years and over	11,055	4,101	6,955	8,901	6,968	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living:								
Alone	4,441	899	3,541	3,477	2,256	40.2	39.1	32.4
With spouse	4,382	2,739	1,643	3,491	2,652	39.6	39.2	38.1
With other relatives	1,905	376	1,531	1,741	1,826	17.2	19.6	26.2
With nonrelatives only	327	87	240	192	234	3.0	2.2	3.4

[8] There is no significant difference between the median income of married elderly ($9,200) and never-married elderly ($8,667).

in 1988 was 33 percent for women 65 to 74 and 51 percent for women 75 years or older, and the proportions who lived with another relative was 14 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

Based on the 1980 decennial census, 2 percent of persons 65 to 74 and 10 percent of persons 75 years and over lived in nursing homes. In the 65–74 age group, similar proportions of men and women lived in nursing homes (1.4 and 1.7 percent). However, for those 75 and over, the proportion for women rose to 12 percent, nearly double the proportion for men (7 percent). (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984a) Older people who live alone are more likely to live subsequently in an institution than are persons who live with others. Apparently, persons who maintain active social lives are more likely to stay healthier and live longer than those who do not (NCHS, 1988b).

Conclusion

Although most persons eventually marry (some more than once), singleness is playing a larger part in our adult lives than in the past. People are delaying marriage, and divorce is continuing at high levels. The average life expectancy is increasing, but on average, women continue to live longer than men. All of these factors have led to an increase in the single population.

Singleness, in most instances, is a temporary state—about 90 percent of people will marry and, of those who divorce, about 70 percent will remarry. But while they are single, people have a set of unique needs for public and private sector services. Issues involving child care and economic equity for single parents, education and work opportunities for young adults, and housing and health care for the elderly, all in some way are associated with trends toward greater singleness in our society.

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Single Parents and Their Children

by Steve W. Rawlings

Introduction and Background

The substantial increase in single-parent situations is one of the most important recent changes in family composition. Divorce rates began to move upward during the late 1950's (Glick and Norton, 1973); this and other factors contributed to the initial moderate rise in single-parent families. But, it was not until the 1970's, when the number of single-parent families increased so dramatically, that the Census Bureau began documenting the phenomenon in Current Population Reports (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974 and 1975).

This major shift in family composition soon captured the attention of a wide audience. In an early and influential study, researchers Ross and Sawhill saw the increase in single-parent families, particularly "female-headed families," as a manifestation of changes in the economic basis of marriage (Ross and Sawhill, 1975). Over the years, additional research has continued to investigate the rising incidence of one-parent families, and the possible long-term impact that these living arrangements may have on the parents and the children involved (Bane and Ellwood, 1984; McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988; Demo and Acock, 1988).

The socioeconomic profile of lone parents and their children may be significantly different from that of their counterparts in two-parent situations (Norton and Glick, 1986). Knowledge of these differences is important when making public policy so that resources can be allocated to those areas of greatest need. Recent Census Bureau reports have highlighted changes in these one-parent families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). This paper provides an in-depth analysis of current differences between one-parent and two-parent families, and is based on an examination of the most up-to-date information.

Table A. **Family Groups with Children Under 18, by Type and Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder or Reference Person: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and group	All family groups		Family households		Related subfamilies		Unrelated subfamilies	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL RACES								
Family groups with children	34,345	100.0	31,920	100.0	1,998	100.0	427	100.0
Two-parent	24,977	72.7	24,600	77.1	366	18.3	11	2.6
One-parent	9,368	27.3	7,320	22.9	1,632	81.7	416	97.4
Mother only	8,146	23.7	6,273	19.7	1,480	74.1	393	92.0
Father only	1,222	3.6	1,047	3.3	152	7.6	23	5.4
WHITE								
Family groups with children	28,104	100.0	26,618	100.0	1,167	100.0	319	100.0
Two-parent	22,013	78.3	21,699	81.5	304	26.0	10	3.1
One-parent	6,090	21.7	4,918	18.5	863	74.0	309	96.9
Mother only	5,100	18.1	4,066	15.3	743	63.7	291	91.2
Father only	990	3.5	852	3.2	120	10.3	18	5.6
BLACK								
Family groups with children	5,057	100.0	4,195	100.0	766	100.0	96	100.0
Two-parent	2,055	40.6	2,016	48.1	39	5.1	-	-
One-parent	3,003	59.4	2,180	52.0	727	94.9	96	100.0
Mother only	2,812	55.6	2,020	48.2	701	91.5	91	94.8
Father only	191	3.8	160	3.8	26	3.4	5	5.2
HISPANIC[1]								
Family groups with children	3,321	100.0	2,991	100.0	291	100.0	39	(B)
Two-parent	2,205	66.4	2,123	71.0	77	26.5	5	(B)
One-parent	1,116	33.6	868	29.0	214	73.5	34	(B)
Mother only	977	29.4	754	25.2	193	66.3	30	(B)
Father only	139	4.2	114	3.8	21	7.2	4	(B)

- Represents zero.
B Base less than 75,000.
[1]May be of any race.
Note: Family groups comprise family households, related subfamilies, and unrelated subfamilies.

Source of Data

The data in this paper are based primarily on estimates obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS) for March 1988 and earlier years. In addition to the basic monthly CPS questions, additional questions are asked in the March supplements to gather more detailed information on households, families, marital status and living arrangements. Although this analysis primarily utilizes CPS data, there are also some data from the 1970 decennial census.

Types of Single-Parent Family Situations

Most single parents maintain their own household; i.e., they are householders who own or rent the living quarters in which they and their children reside.

However, not all one-parent situations involve a distinct and separate family household: about 22 percent of single parents live either in a relative's home, or in some unrelated person's household. In order to encompass all of these types of situations, the Census Bureau uses a "family group" concept which includes not only those single parents who are householders, but also those who are not.

A family group may be any one of three types: a family household (a "family"), a related subfamily, or an unrelated subfamily (table A). For example, a mother and her child would be considered a "family household" if they owned or rented their own home, a "related subfamily" if they resided in a home owned or rented by one or both of the mother's parents (or some other relative), or an "unrelated subfamily" if they lived in a household belonging to the mother's unrelated friend. Any particular household may contain none of these family groups, one such group, or more than one family group.

Increase in Single Parents Since 1970

Between 1970 and 1988, the number of single-parent situations (i.e., one-parent family groups) more than doubled from 3.8 million (3.2 million of these were one-parent family households) to 9.4 million (7.3 million were one-parent family households). The dramatic rise in one-parent situations is also shown by their increase as a proportion of all family groups with children; this proportion has more than doubled from 13 percent in 1970 to 27 percent in 1988 (table B).

Race and Hispanic Origin of Parents

Although almost two-thirds (65 percent) of all single parents are classified as White, one-parent family situations are more prevalent among Blacks than Whites. In 1988, about 59 percent of all Black family groups with children under age 18 present were single-parent situations, compared with 22 percent for Whites. The corresponding proportions in 1970 were 36 percent for Blacks and 10 percent for Whites.

Among Hispanics (who may be of any race), single parents represented about 34 percent of all family groups in which children under 18 were present in 1988. This proportion was higher than that for comparable White family groups overall, but lower than that for Black family groups (figure 1). Comparable 1970 data for Hispanics are not available.

Table B. **Family Groups with Children Under 18, by Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder or Reference Person: 1988, 1980, and 1970**

(Numbers in thousands)

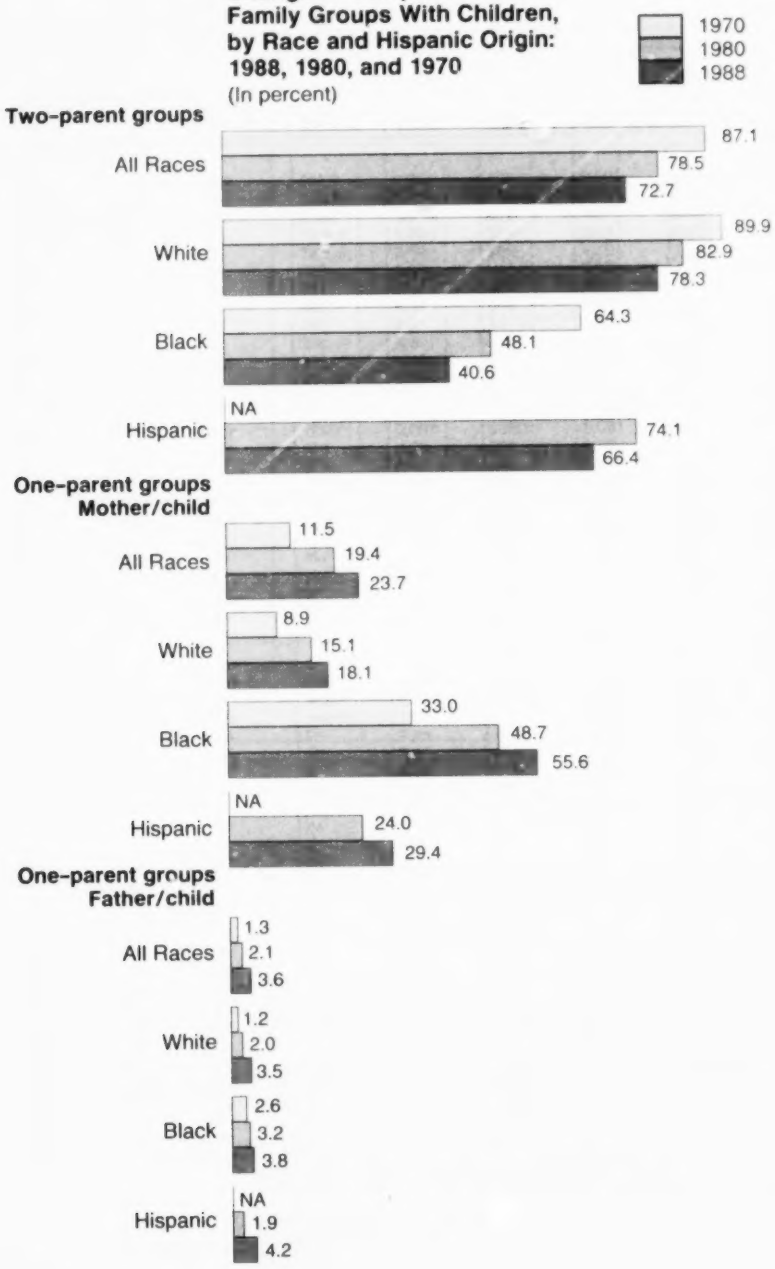
Race and group	1988		1980		1970		Net change, 1980-88		Net change, 1970-80	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Average per year	Number	Average per year
ALL RACES										
Family groups with children	34,345	100.0	32,150	100.0	29,631	100.0	2,195	314	2,519	252
Two-parent	24,977	72.7	25,231	78.5	25,823	87.1	-254	-36	-592	-59
One-parent	9,368	27.3	6,920	21.5	3,808	12.9	2,448	350	3,112	311
Mother only	8,146	23.7	6,230	19.4	3,415	11.5	1,916	274	2,815	282
Father only	1,222	3.6	690	2.1	393	1.3	532	76	297	30
WHITE										
Family groups with children	28,104	100.0	27,294	100.0	26,115	100.0	810	116	1,179	118
Two-parent	22,013	78.3	22,628	82.9	23,477	89.9	-615	-88	-849	-85
One-parent	6,090	21.7	4,664	17.1	2,638	10.1	1,426	204	2,026	203
Mother only	5,100	18.1	4,122	15.1	2,330	8.9	978	140	1,792	179
Father only	990	3.5	542	2.0	307	1.2	448	64	235	24
BLACK										
Family groups with children	5,057	100.0	4,074	100.0	3,219	100.0	983	140	855	86
Two-parent	2,055	40.6	1,961	48.1	2,071	64.3	94	13	-110	-11
One-parent	3,003	59.4	2,114	51.9	1,148	35.7	889	127	966	97
Mother only	2,812	55.6	1,984	48.7	1,063	33.0	828	118	921	92
Father only	191	3.8	129	3.2	85	2.6	62	9	44	4
HISPANIC[1]										
Family groups with children	3,321	100.0	2,194	100.0	(NA)	(NA)	1,127	161	(NA)	(NA)
Two-parent	2,205	66.4	1,626	74.1	(NA)	(NA)	579	83	(NA)	(NA)
One-parent	1,116	33.6	568	25.9	(NA)	(NA)	548	78	(NA)	(NA)
Mother only	977	29.4	526	24.0	(NA)	(NA)	451	64	(NA)	(NA)
Father only	139	4.2	42	1.9	(NA)	(NA)	97	14	(NA)	(NA)

NA Not available.
[1] May be of any race.
Note: Family groups comprise family households, related subfamilies and unrelated subfamilies.

Sex and Marital Status of Parents

The vast majority of one-parent family groups are maintained by the mother. There were an estimated 8.1 million mother-child families in 1988. These

Figure 1.
Change in Composition of Family Groups With Children, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1988, 1980, and 1970
(In percent)



single mothers accounted for about 87 percent of all single parents, slightly below their 90-percent share in both 1980 and 1970 (table C).

The incidence of single fathers was higher among Whites than Blacks. The percentage of one-parent situations maintained by White single fathers has increased from 12 percent of all White single parents in 1980 to 16 percent in 1988; but the corresponding proportion among Blacks was about 6 percent in both 1980 and 1988. Of the estimated 1.2 million one-parent family groups maintained by lone fathers in 1988, about 81 percent of them were White.

Persons may become a single parent by several different paths, but virtually all one-parent situations are created in one of four ways: 1) births out of wedlock (usually, but not always, these births involve women who have never been married), 2) a separation of short or long duration, 3) divorce, or 4) widowhood. Mothers who either had never been married or were divorced accounted for 62 percent of all single parents in 1988. Widowhood is a less traveled path to single parenthood than in the past: the proportion of one-parent situations maintained by widowed women dropped from 18 percent in 1970 to 6 percent in 1988. The proportion of single parents who were currently married women with absent husbands has also declined since 1970. By contrast, the proportion of single parents represented by divorced mothers has increased from 29 percent in 1970 to 33 percent in 1988 and never-married mothers increased from 7 percent in 1980 to 29 percent of lone parents in 1988.

Some of the measured change in the marital status composition of single parents is due to technical refinements in the processing of Current Population Survey results. These modifications, introduced in 1982 and 1983, permitted more complete identification of never-married and other persons maintaining subfamily groups (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

Table C. One-Parent Family Groups, by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Marital Status of Householder or Reference Person: 1988, 1980, and 1970

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and marital status	1988		1980		1970		Net change, 1980-88		Net change, 1970-80	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Average per year	Number	Average per year
ALL RACES										
One-parent family groups	9,368	100.0	6,920	100.0	3,808	100.0	2,448	306	3,112	311
Maintained by mother	8,146	87.0	6,230	90.0	3,415	89.7	1,916	240	2,815	282
Never married	2,707	28.9	1,063	15.4	248	6.5	1,644	206	815	82
Spouse absent	1,776	19.0	1,743	25.2	1,377	36.2	33	4	366	37
Separated	1,500	16.0	1,483	21.4	962	25.3	17	2	521	52
Divorced	3,120	33.3	2,721	39.3	1,109	29.1	399	50	1,612	161
Widowed	544	5.8	703	10.2	682	17.9	−159	−20	21	2
Maintained by father	1,222	13.0	690	10.0	393	10.3	532	67	297	30
Never married	251	2.7	63	0.9	22	0.6	188	24	41	4
Spouse absent*	283	3.0	181	2.6	247	6.5	102	13	−66	−7
Divorced	597	6.4	340	4.9	(NA)	(NA)	257	32	(NA)	(NA)
Widowed	88	0.9	107	1.5	124	3.3	−19	−2	−17	−2
WHITE										
One-parent family groups	6,091	100.0	4,664	100.0	2,638	100.0	1,427	178	2,026	203
Maintained by mother	5,100	83.7	4,122	88.4	2,330	88.3	978	122	1,792	179
Never married	1,049	17.2	379	8.1	73	2.8	670	84	306	31
Spouse absent	1,127	18.5	1,033	22.1	796	30.2	94	12	237	24
Separated	941	15.4	840	18.0	477	18.1	101	13	363	36
Divorced	2,568	42.2	2,201	47.2	930	35.3	367	46	1271	127
Widowed	356	5.8	511	11.0	531	20.1	−155	−19	−20	−2
Maintained by father	990	16.3	542	11.6	307	11.6	448	56	235	24
Never married	173	2.8	32	0.7	18	0.7	141	18	14	1
Spouse absent*	219	3.6	141	3.0	196	7.4	78	10	−55	−6
Divorced	519	8.5	288	6.2	(NA)	(NA)	231	29	(NA)	(NA)
Widowed	78	1.3	82	1.8	93	3.5	−4	−1	−11	−1
BLACK										
One-parent family groups	3,002	100.0	2,114	100.0	1,148	100.0	888	111	966	97
Maintained by mother	2,812	93.7	1,984	93.9	1,063	92.6	828	104	921	92
Never married	1,605	53.5	665	31.5	173	15.1	940	118	492	49
Spouse absent	584	19.5	667	31.6	570	49.7	−83	−10	97	10
Separated	514	17.1	616	29.1	479	41.7	−102	−13	137	14
Divorced	471	15.7	477	22.6	172	15.0	−6	−1	305	31
Widowed	149	5.0	174	8.2	148	12.9	−25	−3	26	3
Maintained by father	191	6.4	129	6.1	85	7.4	62	8	44	4
Never married	70	2.3	30	1.4	4	0.3	40	5	26	3
Spouse absent*	51	1.7	37	1.8	50	4.4	14	2	−13	−1
Divorced	63	2.1	43	2.0	(NA)	(NA)	20	3	(NA)	(NA)
Widowed	7	0.2	19	0.9	30	2.6	−12	−2	−11	−1
HISPANIC[1]										
One-parent family groups	1,116	100.0	568	100.0	(NA)	(NA)	548	69	(NA)	(NA)
Maintained by mother	977	87.5	526	92.6	(NA)	(NA)	451	56	(NA)	(NA)
Never married	351	31.5	120	21.1	(NA)	(NA)	231	29	(NA)	(NA)
Spouse absent	282	25.3	199	35.0	(NA)	(NA)	83	10	(NA)	(NA)
Separated	234	21.0	170	29.9	(NA)	(NA)	64	8	(NA)	(NA)
Divorced	287	25.7	162	28.5	(NA)	(NA)	125	16	(NA)	(NA)
Widowed	58	5.2	46	8.1	(NA)	(NA)	12	2	(NA)	(NA)
Maintained by father	139	12.5	42	7.4	(NA)	(NA)	97	12	(NA)	(NA)
Never married	52	4.7	7	1.2	(NA)	(NA)	45	6	(NA)	(NA)
Spouse absent*	31	2.8	13	2.3	(NA)	(NA)	18	2	(NA)	(NA)
Divorced	49	4.4	13	2.3	(NA)	(NA)	36	5	(NA)	(NA)
Widowed	5	0.4	8	1.4	(NA)	(NA)	−3	—	(NA)	(NA)

- Rounds to zero. NA Not available. * Data for 1970 include divorced fathers.

[1]May be of any race.

Note: Family groups comprise family households, related subfamilies and unrelated subfamilies.

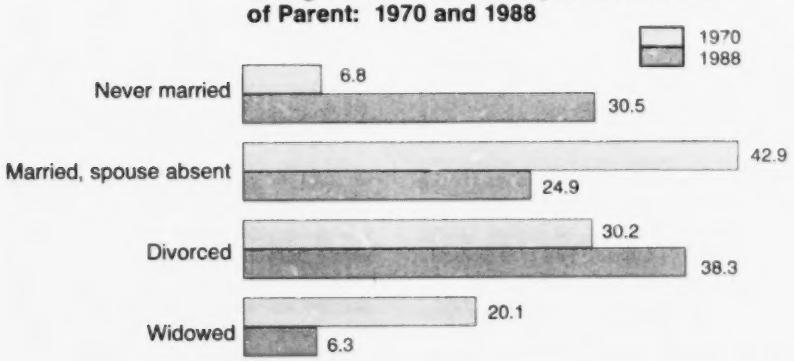
Table D. **Family Groups with Children Under 18, by Age of Parent: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Group and type	All family groups	Age of parent[1]				
		15 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 years and over	Median
ALL RACES						
Total	34,345	2,712	12,546	13,183	5,902	36.3
Both parents	24,977	1,013	8,850	10,203	4,910	37.4
One parent	9,368	1,699	3,696	2,980	992	33.2
Mother only	8,146	1,560	3,300	2,531	756	32.7
Father only	1,222	139	396	449	236	36.5
WHITE						
Total	28,104	1,807	10,161	11,244	4,890	36.7
Both parents	22,013	884	7,810	9,083	4,233	37.3
One parent	6,090	923	2,351	2,161	657	34.1
Mother only	5,100	819	2,023	1,785	473	33.6
Father only	990	104	328	376	184	36.5
BLACK						
Total	5,057	838	2,025	1,498	696	33.4
Both parents	2,055	100	773	755	426	36.9
One parent	3,003	738	1,252	743	270	31.1
Mother only	2,812	703	1,197	680	231	30.8
Father only	191	35	55	63	39	35.6
HISPANIC[2]						
Total	3,321	405	1,316	1,082	521	34.5
Both parents	2,205	167	887	760	394	35.6
One parent	1,116	238	429	322	127	32.3
Mother only	977	216	377	284	103	32.0
Father only	139	22	52	38	24	34.2

[1]Householder or reference person in two-parent situations.
[2]May be of any race.

Figure 2.
Percent Distribution of Children Under 18 Living With One Parent, by Marital Status of Parent: 1970 and 1988



Ages of Parents

Single parents tend to be a bit younger than their counterparts in two-parent situations. In 1988, for example, the median age of persons maintaining one-parent family groups was 33.2 years, compared with a median age of 37.4 years for parents (i.e., householders or reference persons) maintaining two-parent family groups (table D).

Single mothers are likely to be younger than single fathers. The median age of lone mothers in 1988 was almost 4 years younger than that for lone fathers—32.7 years versus 36.5 years. The proportion under 25 years of age in 1988 was 19 percent of single mothers versus 11 percent of single fathers. In contrast, 37 percent of single fathers were middle aged (35 to 44 years old) as compared with 31 percent of single mothers.

The age at which a person becomes a single parent has implications for both the stability of their living arrangement and the economic viability of their family unit. For example, a young teenage mother who has not been married may require shelter and considerable other assistance from her parents, other family members, or available public resources. However, although a 35-year-old divorced mother with child support, an established career, and her own home would face difficulties in her role as a single parent, the amount of assistance needed might be relatively minimal as compared with that required by the teenage mother.

Characteristics of Children Living With One Parent

Much of the interest in one-parent situations focuses on the number and characteristics of these family groups. It is also important, however, to examine the data using children as the unit of analysis, because the child, as well as the parent, experiences one-parent life and tries to cope with the often difficult socioeconomic circumstances.

There were about 63.2 million children under 18 years of age in 1988, and 15.3 million of these children were living with only one parent: 13.5 million with the mother alone and 1.8 million with the father alone (table E). The overall percentage of children living with one parent has risen dramatically from 12 percent of all children under 18 in 1970 to 24 percent, or almost one of every four children, in 1988.

About 63 percent of all children under age 18 living with one parent in 1988 were White, but the incidence of children living with single parents was much higher among all Black children (54 percent) than among all White children (19 percent). The corresponding percentages were considerably lower in 1970: 32 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Among Hispanic children, regardless of race, about 30 percent were living with just one parent in 1988. This was lower than the overall figure for Black children, but higher than that for White children. Comparable 1970 data for Hispanics are not available.

All of these estimates refer only to the living arrangements of children at the time when the survey data were collected. About 24 percent of children under 18 were living with one parent at the time of our 1988 survey, but various estimates indicate that at some point during their childhood (i.e., prior to age 18) 60 percent, or more, of today's children will spend a significant amount of time living with only one parent (Norton and Glick, 1986; Hernandez, 1986; Hofferth, 1985). Additional research indicates that once a child enters a single-parent situation, the living arrangement will have a duration of about 6 years, on average (Bumpass, 1987; Sweet and Bumpass, 1988).

Some children live in a single-parent arrangement because they were born out-of-wedlock, others because their parents separated or one parent died. Ultimately, however, it is divorce that accounts for the largest proportion of children in single-parent families (figure 2). The experience of living in a one-parent family may not be limited to any one cause, or even to just one episode, for any particular child during their childhood years. For example, a child born out of wedlock may later lose a parent through separation or divorce.

In 1988, 50 percent of the White children living with one parent were living with a divorced parent, 25 percent were with a parent who, although married, was living apart from their spouse, 18 percent were with a parent who had never been married, and about 7 percent were with a widowed parent

Table E. **Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1988, 1980, and 1970**

(Excludes persons under 18 years old who were maintaining households or family groups. Numbers in thousands)

Race and arrangement				Percent distribution		
	1988	1980	1970	1988	1980	1970
ALL RACES						
Children under 18 years	63,179	63,427	69,162	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Both parents	45,942	48,624	58,939	72.7	76.7	85.2
One parent	15,329	12,466	8,199	24.3	19.7	11.9
Mother only	13,521	11,406	7,452	21.4	18.0	10.8
Father only	1,808	1,060	748	2.9	1.7	1.1
Other relatives	1,483	1,949	1,547	2.3	3.1	2.2
Nonrelatives only	425	388	477	0.7	0.6	0.7
WHITE						
Children under 18 years	51,030	52,242	58,790	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Both parents	40,287	43,200	52,624	78.9	82.7	89.5
One parent	9,624	7,901	5,109	18.9	15.1	8.7
Mother only	8,160	7,059	4,581	16.0	13.5	7.8
Father only	1,464	842	528	2.9	1.6	0.9
Other relatives	818	887	696	1.6	1.7	1.2
Nonrelatives only	301	254	362	0.6	0.5	0.6
BLACK						
Children under 18 years	9,699	9,375	9,422	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Both parents	3,739	3,956	5,508	38.6	42.2	58.5
One parent	5,247	4,297	2,996	54.1	45.8	31.8
Mother only	4,959	4,117	2,783	51.1	43.9	29.5
Father only	288	180	213	3.0	1.9	2.3
Other relatives	620	999	820	6.4	10.7	8.7
Nonrelatives only	94	123	97	1.0	1.3	1.0
HISPANIC[1]						
Children under 18 years	6,786	5,459	[2] 4,006	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Both parents	4,497	4,116	3,111	66.3	75.4	77.7
One parent	2,047	1,152	(NA)	30.2	21.1	(NA)
Mother only	1,845	1,069	(NA)	27.2	19.6	(NA)
Father only	202	83	(NA)	3.0	1.5	(NA)
Other relatives	180	183	(NA)	2.7	3.4	(NA)
Nonrelatives only	62	8	(NA)	0.9	0.1	(NA)

NA Not available.
[1]May be of any race.
[2]Persons under 18 years.
Source of 1970 Hispanic origin data: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(2)-1C, *Persons of Spanish Origin.*

Table F. **Children Under 18 Years Living With One Parent, by Marital Status of Parent, by Race and Hispanic Origin of Child: 1988, 1980, and 1970**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race of child and marital status of parent				Percent distribution		
	1988	1980	1970	1988	1980	1970
All children	15,329	12,466	8,199	100.0	100.0	100.0
Marital status of parent:						
Divorced	5,871	5,281	2,473	38.3	42.4	30.2
Married, spouse absent	3,814	3,898	3,521	24.9	31.3	42.9
Separated	3,242	3,327	2,484	21.1	26.7	30.3
Other	472	571	1,037	3.1	4.6	12.6
Widowed	970	1,469	1,649	6.3	11.8	20.1
Never married	4,673	1,820	557	30.5	14.6	6.8
White children	9,624	7,901	5,110	100.0	100.0	100.0
Marital status of parent:						
Divorced	4,829	4,106	1,997	50.2	52.0	39.1
Married, spouse absent	2,401	2,243	1,822	24.9	28.4	35.7
Separated	2,047	1,817	1,111	21.3	23.0	21.7
Other	287	426	711	3.0	5.4	13.9
Widowed	659	1,000	1,160	6.8	12.7	22.7
Never married	1,734	552	131	18.0	7.0	2.6
Black children	5,247	4,297	2,995	100.0	100.0	100.0
Marital status of parent:						
Divorced	897	1,078	438	17.1	25.1	14.6
Married, spouse absent	1,253	1,573	1,651	23.9	36.6	55.1
Separated	1,100	1,463	1,343	21.0	34.0	44.8
Other	132	110	308	2.5	2.6	10.3
Widowed	254	411	482	4.8	9.6	16.1
Never married	2,843	1,235	423	54.2	28.7	14.1
Hispanic children[1]	2,048	1,152	(NA)	100.0	100.0	(NA)
Marital status of parent:						
Divorced	615	353	(NA)	30.0	30.6	(NA)
Married, spouse absent	642	468	(NA)	31.3	40.6	(NA)
Separated	531	400	(NA)	25.9	34.7	(NA)
Other	105	68	(NA)	5.1	5.9	(NA)
Widowed	118	103	(NA)	5.8	8.9	(NA)
Never married	672	228	(NA)	32.8	19.8	(NA)

NA Not available.
[1]May be of any race.

(table F). The proportions of White children living with a divorced or never-married parent have risen substantially from their 1970 levels, while the percentages living with a parent who was widowed or living separately from their spouse have declined. As mentioned previously, part of these measured changes may be explained by improvements in survey procedures (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

Among Black children in 1988, over half (54 percent) of the 5.2 million living with one parent were living with a parent who had never been married. This proportion was three times higher than that for White children. Conversely, only about 17 percent of Black children in one-parent situations were with a divorced parent, the marital status category accounting for half of White children living with single parents.

The 2.0 million Hispanic children (of any race) living with one parent in 1988 were less likely than White children, overall, to be living with a divorced parent, and less likely than Black children, overall, to be living with a never-married parent. Comparable data on children of Hispanic origin were not available for 1970.

According to figures from the National Center for Health Statistics, birth rates among unmarried women have increased substantially since the mid–1970's. Divorce rates have stopped their dramatic increase, and have remained relatively stable for the past 10 years or so (National Center for Health Statistics, 1988). Although divorce rates are no longer rising steeply, the level at which they have stabilized is very high. In the absence of any sizable decline in either birth rates for unmarried women or divorce rates, it is certain that, for many years to come, a large number of youngsters will spend some time in a single-parent setting.

Ages of Children Living With One Parent

Children of any age may already have lived for a period with just one parent, or may experience such an arrangement at some future point during their childhood. In 1988, an estimated 5.1 million of the children living with one parent were under 6 years of age, 5.2 million were 6 to 11 years old, and 5.1 million were 12 to 17 years of age (table G). Thus, when considering the needs of these children and their families, a program or service targeted primarily at pre-school-age children might reach less than one-third of those children actually in one-parent situations.

Among Blacks, about 6 of every 10 (61 percent) children under 6 years of age were living with one parent in 1988, compared with less than 2 of every 10 (17 percent) of White children under 6. The proportion living with one parent

was also more than half for those Black children aged 6 to 11 (58 percent) or 12 to 17 (57 percent). Thus, older Black children are about as likely as younger ones to live with only one of their parents.

About 1.5 million (81 percent) of all children living with the father only in 1988 were White. Only about 28 percent of these children were under 6 years of age, 32 percent were 6 to 11 (which is not significantly more than the percentage for those under 6), and 39 percent were 12 to 17 years old. White children living with the father alone were more likely to be 12 to 17 years old than were White children living with the mother alone (table G).

The age at which a child first lives in a one-parent situation is an important factor in determining the impact of that experience on the child's later years. For example, some studies suggest that the effects of divorce on the emotional well-being of children are more traumatic for adolescents than the very young (Demo and Acock, 1988). Young children with unmarried teenage mothers are at greatest risk of being in poverty, and suffering its consequences (Bane and Ellwood, 1983). Recent analysis further indicates that the tendency to form one-parent families may be, to some extent, dependent on one's early childhood experiences. One study suggests that "children of divorce" may, in later life, have a lower commitment to marriage (Glenn and Kramer, 1987). Others contend that women who experienced their parents' marital instability were more likely than other women to "inherit" a tendency to eventually form single-parent families themselves (McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988). It should be mentioned that research on the effects of divorce on children is often contradictory and remains inconclusive in many areas.

Table G. **Living Arrangements of Children Under 18, by Age of Child, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and arrangement	Children under 18	Children under age 6			Children 6 to 11	Children 12 to 17
		Total	Under 3	3 to 5		
ALL RACES						
Total	61,271	21,526	10,855	10,670	20,359	19,386
Both parents	45,942	16,460	8,365	8,094	15,193	14,290
One parent	15,329	5,066	2,490	2,576	5,166	5,096
Mother only	13,521	4,531	2,206	2,325	4,588	4,402
Father only	1,808	535	284	251	578	694
WHITE						
Total	49,911	17,538	8,824	8,714	16,561	15,813
Both parents	40,287	14,514	7,388	7,127	13,276	12,497
One parent	9,624	3,023	1,436	1,587	3,285	3,316
Mother only	8,160	2,610	1,232	1,378	2,810	2,741
Father only	1,464	413	204	209	475	575
BLACK						
Total	8,986	3,121	1,580	1,540	3,025	2,840
Both parents	3,739	1,230	604	626	1,283	1,226
One parent	5,247	1,891	976	914	1,742	1,614
Mother only	4,959	1,785	911	873	1,653	1,521
Father only	288	106	65	41	89	93
HISPANIC[1]						
Total	6,544	2,443	1,215	1,228	2,239	1,863
Both parents	4,497	1,671	838	833	1,564	1,261
One parent	2,047	771	377	395	675	601
Mother only	1,845	686	331	356	602	557
Father only	202	85	46	39	73	44

[1]May be of any race.

Concentration in Metropolitan Areas

The stresses of metropolitan living do not necessarily cause the formation of one-parent situations. Indeed, it could be argued that the people and families in nonmetropolitan areas have problems that are just as likely to create situations involving single parents and their children. The largest metropolitan areas, however, have a slightly higher concentration of children living with one parent as compared with those living with two parents. For example, in 1988, about 46 percent of children living with one parent resided in metropolitan areas with 1 million or more people as compared with 41 percent of children living with both parents (table H). This difference could be affected by the racial composition of the area, however.

About 41 percent of White children living with single parents were in metropolitan areas with at least a million people—not much higher than the percentage for those living with two parents (39 percent). Among Black children with only one parent present, 55 per-

Table H. **Living Arrangements of Children Under 18, by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Residence: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and arrangement	Children under 18	In metropolitan areas			Outside metropolitan areas
		Total	1 million or more	Under 1 million	
ALL RACES					
Total	61,271	46,910	25,852	21,058	14,361
Both parents	45,942	34,770	18,771	15,999	11,172
One parent	15,329	12,139	7,081	5,058	3,190
Mother only	13,521	10,732	6,339	4,393	2,789
Father only	1,808	1,407	742	665	401
WHITE					
Total	49,911	37,547	19,686	17,861	12,364
Both parents	40,287	30,034	15,708	14,327	10,253
One parent	9,624	7,513	3,978	3,534	2,111
Mother only	8,160	6,392	3,410	2,981	1,768
Father only	1,464	1,121	568	553	343
BLACK					
Total	8,986	7,336	4,751	2,586	1,649
Both parents	3,739	3,058	1,878	1,181	681
One parent	5,247	4,279	2,873	1,405	968
Mother only	4,959	4,036	2,725	1,311	923
Father only	288	243	148	94	45
HISPANIC[1]					
Total	6,544	6,014	3,988	2,026	531
Both parents	4,497	4,099	2,680	1,419	398
One parent	2,047	1,915	1,308	607	132
Mother only	1,845	1,727	1,188	539	118
Father only	202	188	120	68	14

[1]May be of any race.

cent lived in these large metropolitan areas, compared with 50 percent of those with both parents present.

In sum, children in one-parent families live in all sorts of residential settings, from the most rural farming areas to densely populated cities containing several million people. However, a child in a one-parent situation is more likely than a child in a two-parent situation to live in a place with at least 1 million inhabitants.

Educational Level of Parents

The parent's educational level is an important aspect of the socioeconomic profile of children and their families.

Children in single-parent families are much more likely to live with a parent who has not completed high school than are children in two-parent situations. In 1988, for example, the proportion of children living with a parent (i.e., householder or reference person) who had not completed high school was 32 percent among those in single-parent family groups versus only 17 percent of children in two-parent situations (table I).

At the opposite end of the educational spectrum, children living with two parents have a greater likelihood having a parent (the householder or reference person) who is a college graduate than do children with an absent parent. In 1988, about 26 percent of children with both parents present were in families maintained by a parent who had completed 4 or more years of college, but the corresponding proportion for children who lived with single mothers was only 7 percent. If the single parent was the child's father, the college-educated proportion was 14 percent, still well below the proportion for children living with both parents. Clearly, to the extent that the parent's educational level is an important determinant of a child's general well-being, children in one-parent situations are at a disadvantage.

Among White children, 29 percent of those with just one parent present in 1988 had parents who had not completed high school, compared with 39 percent of Black children, and 60 percent of Hispanic children (of any race). Previous studies have cited substantial improvements since 1970 in the educational level of single parents (Norton and Glick, 1986). The 1988 data indicate that further gains remain to be made before single-parent families achieve educational parity with two-parent families.

Labor Force Status of Parents

Single parents with low educational levels, particularly those who have not completed high school, are at a great disadvantage in competing for, and holding, good jobs. The disparity between children in two-parent versus mother-child situations in terms of the labor force status of the parents is striking. In 1988, about 84 percent of children living with both parents had a parent (i.e., the householder or reference person) who was employed full-time, compared with only 42 percent of children living with the mother alone (table J). However, only 12 percent of children living with both parents were in a setting where the householder or reference person was unemployed or not in the labor force, but the proportion

among children with single mothers was about four times higher (48 percent). Once again, the child is the unit of analysis in these comparisons.

The circumstances of White children essentially mirror those of children overall, but the labor force participation of the parents of Black children is quite different. Blacks living with both parents are less likely than their White counterparts to have a parent (i.e., the householder or reference person) who is employed full-time, and more likely to be in a family group maintained by a parent who is unemployed or not in the labor force. Among Black children living with single mothers, only 34 percent had a mother who was employed full time, while the majority (58 percent) lived with a mother who was either unemployed or not in the labor force.

Among Hispanic children (of any race) with single mothers, 29 percent had a mother working full-time, an even lower percentage than those for Whites or Blacks, overall. As was the case among Blacks, most Hispanic children with single mothers lived with mothers who were either unemployed or not in the labor force.

Although many of these single parents may live in areas where jobs are scarce, their lack of work skills and experience, along with their often limited education, compounds the employment difficulties faced by these parents, particularly the mothers. Problems securing adequate child care may further complicate the single parent's ability to seek a job. All working parents face obstacles in finding acceptable child care arrangements, but the single parent has no spouse or second parent present in the home who can help out or fill in on a regular, or even an occasional, basis. In these cases, adequate child care arrangements are a vital prerequisite to the parent's holding a steady job.

Table I. **Children Under 18, by Race and Hispanic Origin of Child and Education of Parent: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race of child and education of parent	Children under 18	Years of school completed by parent[1]			
		Less than 12 years	High school, 4 years	Some college, 1 to 3 years	College, 4 or more years
ALL RACES					
Total	61,271	12,765	23,899	11,356	13,250
Both parents	45,942	7,788	17,256	8,898	12,000
One parent	15,329	4,976	6,644	2,459	1,249
Mother only	13,521	4,508	5,881	2,138	993
Father only	1,808	468	763	321	256
WHITE					
Total	49,911	9,384	19,351	9,478	11,697
Both parents	40,287	6,603	15,131	7,756	10,797
One parent	9,624	2,781	4,221	1,722	900
Mother only	8,160	2,404	3,607	1,461	689
Father only	1,464	377	614	261	211
BLACK					
Total	8,986	2,863	3,926	1,441	757
Both parents	3,739	818	1,661	792	468
One parent	5,247	2,044	2,265	649	288
Mother only	4,959	1,957	2,138	605	258
Father only	288	87	127	44	30
HISPANIC[2]					
Total	6,544	3,586	1,839	692	428
Both parents	4,497	2,365	1,238	501	392
One parent	2,047	1,221	601	191	36
Mother only	1,845	1,123	527	167	30
Father only	202	98	74	24	6

[1]Householder or reference person in two-parent situations.
[2]May be of any race.

Family Income

Children in one-parent families are very likely to be living with a parent who is trying to "make ends meet" on a very low income. About 13.5 million or 88 percent of the 15.3 million children in single-parent families in 1988 were living with the mother; their average (mean) family income was $11,989, compared with $23,919 for those in single-father situations and $40,067 for children in households where both parents were present (table K). These disparities reflect both the greater earning power of single fathers, and the fact that many two-parent families can rely on the incomes of two working parents.

Recent research has shown that women maintaining families alone face serious handicaps in their battle to avoid, or escape from, poverty. One study suggests that those mother-child situations resulting from an out-of-wedlock birth are the ones most likely to be poor and in need of public support (Bane and Ellwood, 1983). Nevertheless, divorce can also exact large economic penalties. Some research,

Table J. **Living Arrangements of Children Under 18, by Race and Hispanic Origin of Child and Labor Force Status of Parent: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and arrangement	Children under 18	Parent[1] in labor force				Parent[1] not in labor force
		Total	Employed		Unemployed	
			Full time	Part time		
ALL RACES						
Total	61,271	51,862	45,454	3,388	3,020	9,409
Both parents	45,942	42,146	38,454	1,932	1,760	3,796
One parent	15,329	9,715	7,000	1,455	1,260	5,614
Mother only	13,521	8,157	5,737	1,337	1,083	5,364
Father only	1,808	1,558	1,263	118	177	250
WHITE						
Total	49,911	43,984	39,317	2,641	2,026	5,927
Both parents	40,287	37,453	34,388	1,617	1,448	2,834
One parent	9,624	6,531	4,929	1,024	578	3,094
Mother only	8,160	5,248	3,881	923	444	2,913
Father only	1,464	1,283	1,048	101	134	181
BLACK						
Total	8,986	6,110	4,610	614	886	2,876
Both parents	3,739	3,156	2,737	200	219	583
One parent	5,247	2,953	1,873	414	667	2,294
Mother only	4,959	2,728	1,702	402	625	2,231
Father only	288	225	171	12	42	63
HISPANIC[2]						
Total	6,544	4,919	3,967	494	458	1,625
Both parents	4,497	3,982	3,298	317	367	514
One parent	2,047	937	669	177	91	1,111
Mother only	1,845	773	535	164	73	1,073
Father only	202	164	134	13	18	38

[1]Householder or reference person in two-parent situations.
[2]May be of any race.

based on data from California, had originally suggested that women experienced a tremendous decline in their standard of living in the first year after divorce, while their former husband's economic well-being actually improved after the divorce (Weitzman, 1985). Other more recent research argues that the California study overstates the magnitude of the drop in women's living standards, and that the actual decline in the economic status of women after divorce is about 33 percent (Hoffman and Duncan, 1988).

About 47 percent of the children living with single mothers were in families with income levels below $7,500, compared with only 20 percent of those with single fathers and a mere 4 percent of those residing with both parents. Thus, the proportion of children in mother-child families in this very low income bracket was 12 times higher than the comparable proportion for children living with both parents. In contrast, 70 percent of children living with both parents were in families with incomes of $25,000 or more per year, but only 12 percent of children living with lone mothers were in this middle-to-affluent income level.

Among Black children, the average (mean) family income for those with single mothers ($8,929) was only 28 percent of the average income level enjoyed by Black children living with two parents ($31,423). Both of these income levels for Black children, however, were significantly lower than those for White children living in comparable family situations ($13,754 and $40,833, respectively).

Among Hispanic children (of any race) the average family income for those with lone mothers ($9,507) was 35 percent as large as that for those with both parents ($27,159). These income levels were below the levels for White children in comparable family settings.

Conclusion

There has been speculation in the popular media and elsewhere concerning how pervasive the single-parent phenomenon is likely to become. Is the day near when half of all families involving children will be maintained by just one parent? Probably not, under any foreseeable set of circumstances. However, even if one-parent situations never become as dominant a feature of American family life as two-parent situations, today's single parents and their children already constitute a large and often socioeconomically impaired segment of our society.

The term "single parent" has come to be a sort of shorthand phrase that actually refers to a wide variety of complex living arrangements and circumstances. The "single-parent family" may generally be thought of as the stereotypical never-married or divorced mother who is poorly educated, and whose family is impoverished because of her inability to find a job at an income level that is adequate to sustain a decent standard of living. As we have shown, however, single-parent situations encompass a wide spectrum of possibilities. Just as single-parent families differ among themselves, so they also have characteristics that distinguish them as a group from two-parent families. The current data clearly indicate that many single-parent families continue to be seriously disadvan-

taged in a number of ways when compared to two-parent families.

The single parent and his or her children face many problems and needs, not all of them economic, and their difficulties are not diminished just because their numbers are not increasing as rapidly as they were in the early 1970's. These difficulties will continue to pose challenges for many years to come, not only for researchers trying to provide information and understanding, but also to policy makers seeking long-term and workable solutions.

Table K. **Children Under 18, by Family Income: 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and arrangement	Children under 18	Family income in 1987				Mean income
		Under $7,500	$7,500 to 14,999	$15,000 to 24,999	$25,000 and over	
ALL RACES						
Total	61,271	8,529	7,923	10,188	34,631	$33,394
Both parents	45,942	1,762	4,191	7,630	32,360	40,067
One parent	15,329	6,768	3,732	2,560	2,271	(NA)
Mother only	13,521	6,410	3,385	2,160	1,568	11,989
Father only	1,808	358	347	400	703	23,919
WHITE						
Total	49,911	5,057	5,689	8,285	30,879	35,953
Both parents	40,287	1,447	3,366	6,424	29,051	40,833
One parent	9,624	3,612	2,325	1,861	1,827	(NA)
Mother only	8,160	3,340	2,074	1,536	1,211	13,754
Father only	1,464	272	251	325	616	25,418
BLACK						
Total	8,986	3,172	1,834	1,570	2,412	18,500
Both parents	3,739	183	559	931	2,065	31,423
One parent	5,247	2,988	1,275	638	345	(NA)
Mother only	4,959	2,907	1,186	582	284	8,929
Father only	288	81	89	56	61	15,525
HISPANIC[1]						
Total	6,544	1,454	1,613	1,327	2,151	21,921
Both parents	4,497	391	1,048	1,060	1,998	27,159
One parent	2,047	1,063	564	266	153	(NA)
Mother only	1,845	1,016	514	219	96	9,507
Father only	202	47	50	47	57	18,750

NA Not available.
[1]May be of any race.

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Married-Couple Families With Children

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Introduction

Today, the proportion of Americans who have been divorced at some point in their lives is higher than at any other time in U.S. history. As of June 1985, 16.9 percent of the total population 15 years and over and 22.7 percent of the ever-married population 15 years and over was ever divorced.[1] In addition, a record-breaking proportion of children are born to unmarried mothers—23.4 percent in 1986 (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1988). These two phenomena have led to increasing numbers of children living in families that do not contain both of their biological parents. While one of these family types—single-parent families—is discussed in another paper in this report, this paper focuses on married-couple families with children in the household, with an emphasis on families with stepchildren.

A stepchild in a married-couple family is defined as the biological child of one spouse in the married couple but not of the other spouse. Stepchildren may be only children or they may have full, half, or step siblings. Those full, half, and step siblings may live in the same household, or in another household, or in some combination of the two. For this analysis, the universe is limited to those siblings living together in the same married-couple family household.

It has been estimated that about one-quarter of children today will live with a stepparent by the time they have reached 16 years of age (Zill, 1988). Numerous scholars (including Bachrach, 1983; Bumpass, 1984; Cherlin and McCarthy, 1985; Hobart, 1988; Lutz, 1983; and Macklin, 1980) have cited the critical need for more information on the characteristics of stepfamilies as they have become a more common family type. Many of the studies on stepfamilies to date have been based on small, unrepresentative samples and/or on personal observation (for example, Fishman, 1983).

A few studies have been national in scope, but have had other limitations. Bachrach (1983) analyzed data from the 1976 National Survey of Family Growth. These data are nationally representative, but they are somewhat dated, and they only include mothers aged 15 through 44 years—a problem that Bachrach readily acknowledged. Bachrach (1986) also analyzed data from the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth, but only in regard to adoptive children. The Current Population Survey (CPS) data analyzed here show that many mothers in step and adoptive families are 45 years and over and thus would have been excluded from Bachrach's universes in both 1976 and 1982 (see table C). Most studies have focused on children as the unit of analysis. However, it is important to learn more about the family as a unit, since stepfamily and mixed family situations are becoming more common, and because many private activities and public programs are directed toward families, not individual children.

Some groundbreaking work on types of families and children was done by Moorman and Hernandez (1989) in their analysis of data from the June 1980 CPS. The same methodology is employed in this analysis, which extends the earlier analysis by including data from the June 1985 CPS. This permits a comparison of family type characteristics over a 5-year time period.

Methodology

The data analyzed in this paper are from the Current Population Survey, a monthly household survey that consisted of approximately 66,000 households in June 1980 and 60,000 households in June 1985 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986).[2] Supplements to the June 1980 and June 1985 CPS questionnaires included questions on the marital and birth history of women. In addition, limited data were collected on men's marital history.

Married-couple families with at least one "own child" under age 18 living in their household (regardless of the child's marital status) are the sole focus of this study.[3] Estimates of how many children were stepchildren, how many were adoptive children, and how many were biological children have to be derived indirectly since the CPS instrument did not distinguish between the three types of "own" children present in the household.[4] The marital and birth history data from the June

[1] Unpublished data from the June 1985 Current Population Survey.

[2] The U.S. population controls used to weight the June 1980 CPS data were based on the April 1, 1970, census counts. The June 1985 CPS data were weighted using population estimates based on the April 1, 1980, census counts. The estimates based on the 1980 census counts are somewhat larger than corresponding estimates based on the 1970 census counts. This should be kept in mind when analyzing the data.

[3] The "own child" concept combines three distinct types of children into the single category of own children: biological children, stepchildren, and adoptive children. In the present study "own children" are children of the householder and/or the householder's spouse.

In the analysis of families, "own children" usually refers only to single (never-married) children. However, for this study, children of all marital statuses are included in the analysis if they are under age 18 and living in their parents' household.

[4] "Stepchild" is now a separate relationship category on the CPS Control Card as of 1988. However, this category will only identify stepchildren of the person in column 1. It will not identify any stepchildren of the spouse of the person in column 1. Also, there is still no differentiation made in the CPS relationship categories between biological children and adopted children.

The Bureau of the Census' relatively new Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) provides the opportunity to explicitly examine household and family relationships in great depth with its detailed topical modules on household relationships. These topical modules were asked on Wave 8 of the 1984 Panel and Wave 4 of the 1985 Panel. Beginning with the 1986 Panel, the detailed household relationships are now asked as a regular part of Wave 2 of each SIPP panel.

supplements were used to ascertain the exact relationship of each child to each spouse in married-couple family households.

Each child who was the biological child of one of the parents but not of the other parent was classified as a stepchild for the purposes of this study. If one spouse adopted the biological child of the other spouse, the child was still considered to be a stepchild. Children who were the biological children of both parents were classified as biological children, while all "own" children who were not biological children of either of their parents were classified as adoptive children. A detailed statement on the methods used to derive the various child types is presented in a technical note at the end of this paper.

Family Type Classification

All of the married-couple family households with own children were classified according to their various parent-child relationships (see figure 1). This family-group typology was drawn directly from Moorman and Hernandez (1989).

1. Biological families—All the own children were biological children of both parents.
2. Adoptive families—All the own children were adoptive children of both parents.
3. Biological mother-stepfather families—All the own children were biological children of the mother and stepchildren of the father.
4. Biological father-stepmother families—All the own children were biological children of the father and stepchildren of the mother.
5. Joint biological-step families—At least one child was a biological child of both parents, at least one was a biological child of one parent and a stepchild of the other parent, and no other type of child was present; or a stepchild of each parent and no other type of child was present.
6. Joint biological-adoptive families—At least one child was a biological child of both parents, at least one was an adopted child of both parents, and no other type of child was present.
7. Joint step-adoptive families—At least one child was a biological child of one parent and a stepchild of the other parent, at least one was an adopted child of both parents, and no other type of child was present.
8. Joint biological-step-adoptive families—At least one child was a biological child of both parents, at least one was the biological child of one parent and the stepchild of the other, and at least one was an adopted child of both parents.
9. Type-unknown families—At least one child had at least one parent for whom the nature of the relationship could not be designated.

Table A. **Children Living with Biological, Step, and Adoptive Married-Couple Parents, by Race of Mother: June 1980 and 1985**

(Numbers in thousands)

Parent type and race of mother	1980		1985	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL RACES				
Total own children under 18 years	47,248	100.0	45,347	100.0
Biological mother and father	39,523	83.7	37,213	82.1
Biological mother-stepfather	5,355	11.3	6,049	13.3
Stepmother-biological father	727	1.5	740	1.6
Adoptive mother and father	1,350	2.9	866	1.9
Unknown mother or father	293	0.6	479	1.1
WHITE				
Total own children under 18 years	42,329	100.0	39,942	100.0
Biological mother and father	35,852	84.7	33,202	83.1
Biological mother-stepfather	4,362	10.3	4,918	12.3
Stepmother-biological father	664	1.6	676	1.7
Adoptive mother and father	1,209	2.9	754	1.9
Unknown mother or father	242	0.6	391	1.0
BLACK				
Total own children under 18 years	3,775	100.0	3,816	100.0
Biological mother and father	2,698	71.5	2,661	69.7
Biological mother-stepfather	877	23.2	952	24.9
Stepmother-biological father	46	1.2	50	1.3
Adoptive mother and father	119	3.1	76	2.0
Unknown mother or father	35	0.9	77	2.0
OTHER RACES[1]				
Total own children under 18 years	1,144	100.0	1,589	100.0
Biological mother and father	973	85.1	1,350	84.9
Biological mother-stepfather	116	10.1	179	11.3
Stepmother-biological father	17	1.5	13	0.8
Adoptive mother and father	22	2.0	36	2.3
Unknown mother or father	16	1.4	11	0.7

[1] "Other races" is a category principally comprising American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

Source: Current Population Survey.

Analysis

Children in Married-Couple Families

The number of own children under age 18 in married-couple families declined by 4.0 percent between June 1980 and June 1985, from 47,248,000 to 45,347,000 (see table A). Similarly, the number of children living with both of their biological parents in married-couple family situations dropped from 39,523,000 in 1980 to 37,213,000 in 1985 – a 5.8-percent decline. In striking contrast, the number of children living with either a stepmother or a stepfather increased by 11.6 percent, from 6,082,000 in 1980 to 6,789,000 in 1985. Stepchildren made up 15.0 percent of all children in married-couple families in 1985, up from 12.9 percent in 1980.

The trends in the number of own children in White married-couple families closely mirrored those for all races.[5] The story was quite different for children in Black married-couple families, however. There was no significant change in the number of own children in Black married-couple families between 1980 and 1985 (see table A). In June of 1980, there were 3,775,000 such children, while in June of 1985 they numbered 3,816,000. There were also no significant changes in the number of children living with two biological parents or with one stepparent in Black married-couple families between 1980 and 1985.

In 1985, only 69.7 percent of children in Black married-couple families lived with both biological parents, while about 26.3 percent lived with a stepparent (see table A and figure 2). In contrast, 83.1 percent of children in White families lived with both biological parents, while only 14.0 percent were stepchildren.

[5] Race, in this study, always refers to the race of the mother. In a small number of cases either or both the race of the father and/or the race of the child(ren) will be different than that of the mother.

Prevalence of Types of Married-Couple Families

The number (and proportion) of married-couple families with children that had at least one stepchild living in the household increased between 1980 and 1985 (family types 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8). In June of 1985, 4,469,000 married-couple families had at least one stepchild living in the household (see table B and figure 1). This was 18.7 percent of all married-couple families with children. In 1980, there were only 3,888,000 such families (or 16.1 percent of all married-couple families with children).

Married-couple families with stepchildren were closely divided between those that contained the biological children of only one of the parents (family types 3 and 4) and those that contained a "yours-ours" mix of children (family types 5, 7, and 8). In 1985, stepchildren of one or the other parent were the only children in 2,387,000 married-couple families, while 2,082,000 married-couple families contained a "yours-ours" mix of children (see figure 1). Stepchild-only families were 10.0 percent of all married-couple families with children in 1985, while mixed stepfamilies were 8.7 percent of all such families. The comparable figures for 1980 were slightly lower – 8.3 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively.

The vast majority of stepchildren in married-couple families were living with their biological mothers and stepfathers (see table A and figure 2). Only 740,000 (or 10.9 percent) of the 6,789,000 stepchildren in the United States in 1985 were living with their biological fathers and stepmothers. This was not significantly different than the 727,000 stepchildren living with their biological fathers in 1980. The latter figure was 12.0 percent of all stepchildren in 1980.

Marital History of Parents

The mix of children in a married-couple family is obviously greatly affected by the number of times each spouse has been married. If each member of the couple has only been married once, most of the children will be either biological or adoptive.[6] In almost 9 out of 10 families where there are only biological children, both parents have been married once, while in only about 3 out of 100 families with only biological children have both parents been married more than once (see table C). The marital histories of married-couple families in which the children have a biological mother and a stepfather stand in stark contrast to the totally biological families. Both parents had been married once in only 24.5 percent of biological mother-stepfather families in 1980 and 28.3 percent of such families in 1985, while the proportions with both parents married more than once were 46.8 percent in 1980 and 37.6 percent in 1985.

A significant number of the biological mother-stepfather families contain children who were born to the women prior to their first marriage. In 1985, 33.8 percent of these women were only married once, but their husbands were stepfathers to the children in the family.[7] There is some evidence that this was up slightly from the 30.9 percent figure for 1980.[8] The actual proportions of women who had children prior to their first marriage would be higher to

[6] Stepchildren may be found in married-couple families in which both spouses have only been married once if the children were born out of wedlock to the mother. Our methodology does not allow men to have biological children before their first marriage (although this is obviously possible) because most such children are living with their mothers.

[7] The methodology used to identify child-type classifies all biological children of the mother who were born before her current marriage as stepchildren of her current husband. It is probable that some of these children may, in fact, be the biological children of the woman's current husband.

[8] The increase between the 1980 (30.9 percent) and the 1985 (33.8 percent) estimates is significant at the 88-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

Figure 1
Married–Couple Families With Children, by Type of Family: June 1980 and 1985
(Numbers in thousands)

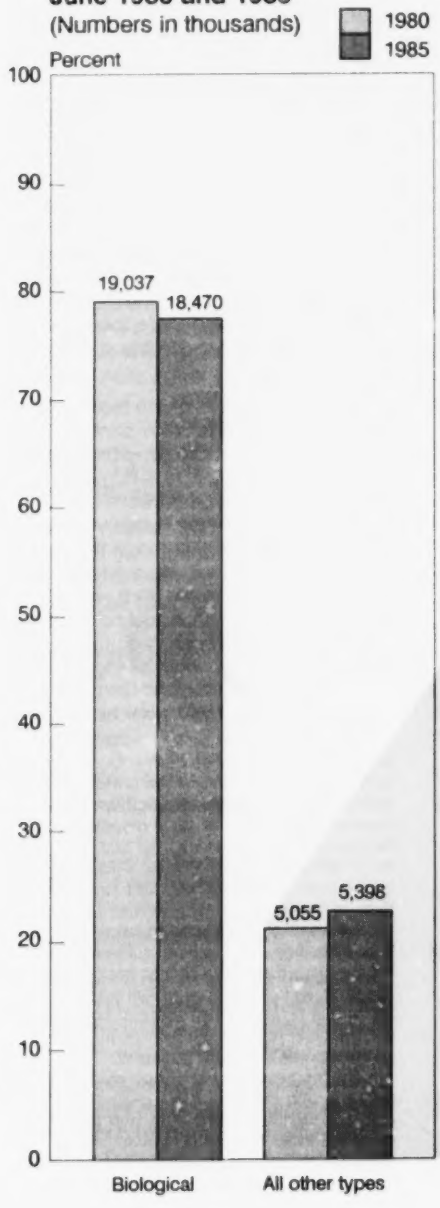

Figure 2
Distributions of Children for White and Black Mothers in Married–Couple Families, by Type of Child: June 1985

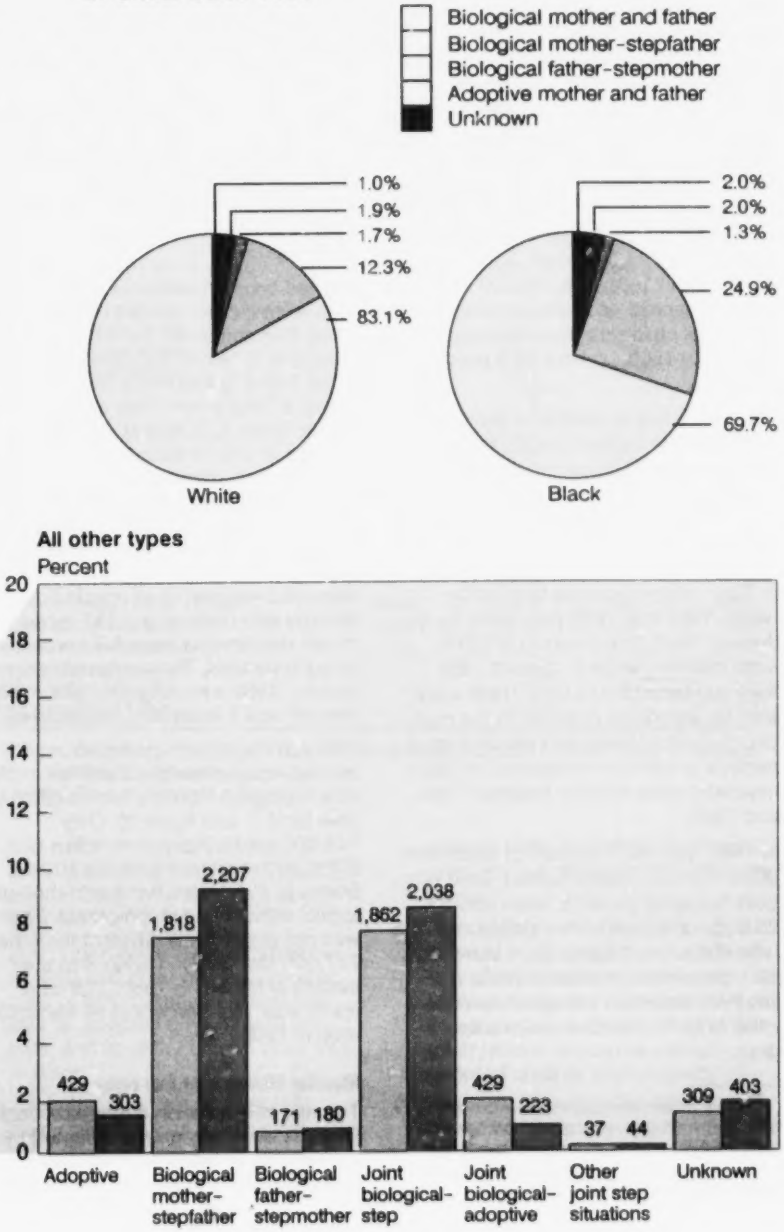

Table B. **Married-Couple Families With Children, by Type of Family and Race of Mother: June 1980 and 1985**

(Numbers in thousands)

Family type and race of mother	1980		1985	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL RACES				
Total	24,091	100.0	23,868	100.0
1. Biological	19,037	79.0	18,470	77.4
2. Adoptive	429	1.8	303	1.3
3. Biological mother-stepfather	1,818	7.5	2,207	9.2
4. Biological father-stepmother	171	0.7	180	0.8
5. Joint biological-step	1,862	7.7	2,038	8.5
6. Joint biological-adoptive	429	1.8	223	0.9
7. Joint step-adoptive	12	-	15	0.1
8. Joint bio-step-adoptive	25	0.1	29	0.1
9. Unknown	309	1.3	403	1.7
WHITE				
Total	21,713	100.0	21,199	100.0
1. Biological	17,471	80.5	16,725	78.9
2. Adoptive	387	1.8	272	1.3
3. Biological mother-stepfather	1,523	7.0	1,865	8.8
4. Biological father-stepmother	160	0.7	164	0.8
5. Joint biological-step	1,500	6.9	1,623	7.7
6. Joint biological-adoptive	376	1.7	195	0.9
7. Joint step-adoptive	7	-	13	0.1
8. Joint bio-step-adoptive	24	0.1	20	0.1
9. Unknown	264	1.2	324	1.5
BLACK				
Total	1,820	100.0	1,873	100.0
1. Biological	1,122	61.6	1,109	59.2
2. Adoptive	33	1.8	24	1.3
3. Biological mother-stepfather	263	14.5	285	15.2
4. Biological father-stepmother	8	0.4	11	0.6
5. Joint biological-step	310	17.0	349	18.6
6. Joint biological-adoptive	42	2.3	17	0.9
7. Joint step-adoptive	5	0.3	2	0.1
8. Joint bio-step-adoptive	1	0.1	8	0.4
9. Unknown	36	2.0	69	3.7
OTHER RACES[1]				
Total	558	100.0	796	100.0
1. Biological	444	79.6	637	80.0
2. Adoptive	8	1.4	7	0.9
3. Biological mother-stepfather	32	5.7	58	7.3
4. Biological father-stepmother	3	0.5	5	0.6
5. Joint biological-step	51	9.1	66	8.3
6. Joint biological-adoptive	11	2.0	11	1.4
7. Joint step-adoptive	-	-	-	-
8. Joint bio-step-adoptive	-	-	2	0.3
9. Unknown	10	1.8	11	1.4

- Represents zero.
[1] "Other races" is a category principally comprising American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.
Source: Current Population Survey.

the extent that women who had been married more than once bore children before their first marriage.

Married couples who have only stepchildren are more likely to have entered into their current marriage less than 10 years ago than those with other types of children or with combinations of child types. Eight or 9 out of every 10 couples with only stepchildren have been married (currently) less than 10 years. In contrast, about one-third of married couples with only biological children have been married less than 10 years. Couples in families which contain both biological children and stepchildren (i.e., a "yours-ours" mix) are less likely than their stepchild-only counterparts to have been married less than 10 years. About three-quarters of these "yours-ours" couples have been married less than a decade.

These data confirm, then, what common sense would lead one to believe: married-couple families which contain only biological and/or adoptive children are more likely to contain parents who have been married only to each other and who have been in their current marriage for a longer period of time than parents in families which contain stepchildren. For there to be a stepchild in a family, at least one of the parents had to be married twice or the mother had to have a birth prior to her first marriage. Married couples who have adopted children have to have been married long enough to have both made the decision to adopt and to have waited for a baby to become available for adoption. This would suggest that adoptive families would be more likely to have intact first marriages and to have been married longer than stepfamilies. Both of these conditions are, in fact, true.

Age of Mothers

Mothers in stepfamily situations are younger than those in other family types. The average age for a mother in a married-couple family with own children (under 18) in the household was 35.2 years old in 1985 (see table C).

Mothers in joint biological-step families had the youngest mean age (31.9 years) while those in stepfather-only families had the second youngest age on average (34.1 years). The oldest mothers in married-couple households with own children were those in adoptive-only families (44.7 years) followed by those in joint biological-adoptive families (39.3 years).

It is not surprising that mothers with adoptive children were the oldest on average, for the same reasons that they were likely to have only been married once and for a relatively long time. Many of the adoptive-only mothers probably adopted children only after spending a long period of time trying to conceive their own child followed by a period of time on a waiting list to adopt a child. Bachrach (1986), in her analysis of data from the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth, found that women in families that adopt children were more likely to be older, (otherwise) childless, and have fecundity problems. Some mothers in joint biological-adoptive families may have adopted because they had problems conceiving a child or an additional child, while others may have felt that they had enough biological children but still wanted more children. Any of the above joint biological-adoptive scenarios would have led to an elongated period with own children in the household.

Age of Fathers

The mean age of fathers in the various family types resembled that of their wives, on average. However, the male distribution was uniformly 2 to 3 years older with the exception of stepmother-biological father families, where in 1985 the difference between the average ages of the parents showed the husband to be 5.5 years older than the wife.[9] These differences in average ages were to be expected since women tend to marry older men. The U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (1989) reported that in 1983 all grooms had a mean age at marriage that was 2.7 years older than all brides. Previously divorced grooms were 6.8 years older on average than their never-married brides, while previously widowed grooms were 11.3 years older on average than their never-married brides. Almost 52 percent of the stepmother-biological father families in the June 1985 CPS involved marriages between previously divorced or widowed men and never-married women.

Education of Parents

Stepfathers generally had less formal education than all fathers in married-couple families. In 1985, only 18.3 percent of all married-couple fathers had failed to graduate from high school, while 22.1 percent of fathers in joint biological-step families and 22.7 percent of fathers in stepfather-only families had left school without earning a high school diploma. Fathers in joint biological-step families (35.3 percent) and stepfather-only families (35.5 percent) were also less likely than the average father (43.9 percent) to have had any college education at all.[10]

All types of mothers in married-couple families (except for those in stepmother-only families) were less likely to have had any college education than their male counterparts in both 1980 and 1985.[11] This was not true at the other end of the educational spectrum, however; mothers in some family types were more likely than the fathers in those family types to have completed high school. In other family types, they were equally or less likely to have completed high school.

Within the typology of mothers in married-couple families, mothers in stepfamilies (like their male counterparts) were more likely than the average mother to be educationally deprived, at least as far as their formal education was concerned. In 1985, only 16.7 percent of all mothers in married-couple families were not high school graduates, but 22.7 percent of mothers in joint biological-step families and 19.7 percent of those in stepfather-only families had not earned a high school diploma. Mothers in joint biological-step families (25.6 percent) and stepfather-only families (29.1 percent) were also less likely to have had any college education than the average mother in married-couple families (36.6 percent).

It would appear, then, that the marital stability exhibited by members of married-couple families was related to their level of (formal) educational attainment (i.e., parents in stepfamilies were more likely to have been married more than once and were likely to be more poorly educated than parents in general). This conclusion is supported by similar findings reported by the National Center for Health Statistics (1989). Vital statistics for 1983 from marriage and divorce registration states showed that men and women dissolving first marriages had a lower level of educational attainment than men and women marrying for the first time. NCHS (1989) also compiled data for 1983 for the 20 states that collected both previous marital status and educational attainment on their marriage records. These data showed that among persons under age 45, persons remarrying had a lower level of educational attainment than those marrying for the first time. Wilson (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1989) concludes that "The lower education of previously divorced persons may well reflect the relatively

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[9] The difference between the mean ages of mothers (44.7 years) and fathers (46.7 years) in adoptive-only families is significant at the 88-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

[10] There is no statistically significant difference between the proportions of fathers with any college education in joint biological-step families and in stepfather-only families.

[11] The difference in 1985 between the proportion of mothers (30.7 percent) and fathers (39.5 percent) in joint biological-adoptive families who have any college education is only significant at the 86-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

Table C. Distribution of Married-Couple Families With Children, by Type of Family and Selected Characteristics: June 1980 and 1985

Characteristic	All family types[1]		1. Biological		2. Adoptive		3. Stepfather		4. Stepmother		5. Joint biological-step		6. Joint biological-adoptive	
	1980	1985	1980	1985	1980	1985	1980	1985	1980	1985	1980	1985	1980	1985
Number (thousands)	24,091	23,638	19,037	18,470	429	303	1,818	2,207	171	180	1,862	2,038	429	223
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Times parents married:														
Both once	78.7	76.1	88.0	86.3	82.0	84.1	24.5	28.3	(X)	(X)	39.6	38.3	91.6	92.2
Mother once	7.1	7.7	6.6	7.1	7.3	5.5	6.4	5.5	39.6	51.6	11.2	13.3	4.7	5.5
Father once	6.0	7.8	3.1	3.9	5.5	5.3	22.3	28.6	(X)	(X)	19.9	21.0	2.3	1.0
Both more than once	8.2	8.4	2.3	2.7	5.2	5.1	46.8	37.6	60.4	48.4	29.3	27.4	1.4	1.3
Age of mother:														
Under 35 years	50.2	49.7	49.5	48.8	17.7	18.6	52.9	53.5	45.9	45.4	71.2	67.1	14.7	16.2
35 to 44 years	33.4	37.6	33.5	37.9	24.9	38.1	38.3	38.8	24.7	36.7	26.2	30.8	58.0	66.7
45 years and over	16.3	12.7	17.0	13.3	57.6	43.3	8.8	7.8	29.4	17.9	2.6	2.1	27.3	17.1
Mean age (years)	35.3	35.2	35.5	35.3	46.6	44.7	33.9	34.1	37.4	37.0	31.4	31.9	41.0	39.3
Age of father:														
Under 35 years	39.9	38.6	39.7	38.3	9.8	16.9	42.6	41.8	22.7	13.9	53.3	49.5	10.7	8.1
35 to 44 years	34.7	39.8	34.8	40.0	26.3	30.8	33.6	37.7	40.7	51.1	36.3	40.0	43.4	57.4
45 years and over	25.4	21.7	25.5	21.7	63.6	52.3	23.9	20.5	36.6	35.0	10.4	10.5	45.7	34.5
Mean age (years)	38.2	37.9	38.2	37.9	48.9	46.7	37.5	37.3	42.0	42.5	34.7	35.1	44.2	42.0
Duration of current marriage:														
Under 10 years	40.3	41.9	33.4	33.8	10.3	15.1	88.3	87.6	79.5	79.2	73.5	74.1	5.1	1.9
10 to 19 years	36.3	38.8	40.2	43.7	28.0	30.9	11.6	12.4	16.4	15.3	26.2	25.7	42.4	59.6
20 to 29 years	18.7	15.9	21.5	18.8	35.9	33.5	-	-	2.3	3.5	0.2	0.2	43.6	37.1
30 years or more	4.7	3.5	4.9	3.7	25.6	20.5	-	-	1.8	1.9	-	-	8.9	1.4
Number of children:														
Total own children	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	2.8	2.8	3.8	3.9
Biological children	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.8	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	1.3	1.3	2.4	2.5
Adoptive children	0.1	-	(X)	(X)	1.3	1.2	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	1.4	1.4
Stepchildren	0.3	0.3	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	(X)	(X)
Mother's education:														
Less than 12 years	21.2	16.7	18.7	15.0	24.5	24.7	30.2	19.7	22.8	14.9	30.9	22.7	31.9	24.5
Exactly 12 years	48.0	46.8	48.3	46.0	41.7	43.4	47.5	51.2	43.9	45.6	49.9	51.7	43.4	44.9
More than 12 years	30.8	36.6	33.0	39.0	33.8	31.9	22.3	29.1	33.3	39.4	19.1	25.6	24.9	30.7
Father's education:														
Less than 12 years	22.9	18.3	20.9	16.8	26.8	24.2	27.2	22.7	27.6	17.3	30.3	22.1	34.0	22.9
Exactly 12 years	37.2	37.9	36.8	37.2	29.1	35.1	41.6	41.8	35.3	34.8	42.7	42.6	29.1	37.6
More than 12 years	39.9	43.9	42.3	46.1	43.8	40.7	31.1	35.5	37.1	47.9	27.0	35.3	37.1	39.5
Parents' labor force status:														
Both in labor force	41.2	46.0	40.5	45.0	40.6	37.4	50.4	56.3	53.7	55.9	41.0	47.1	34.5	34.8
Father in labor force	54.7	49.5	55.9	51.0	47.2	45.9	43.8	38.5	40.3	37.5	54.7	48.2	58.9	59.5
Mother in labor force	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.7	2.2	4.3	1.8	2.4	2.2	2.8	1.7	1.8	1.9	-
Both not in labor force	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.3	10.0	12.3	4.0	2.7	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.9	4.8	5.8
Family income:[2]														
Low income	27.5	29.2	25.4	27.1	24.9	28.1	35.7	36.0	25.9	19.7	38.7	39.9	29.8	26.0
Middle income	35.0	34.3	35.8	35.0	31.9	30.0	30.8	30.9	28.8	31.4	33.9	34.6	28.8	33.2
High income	32.4	32.9	33.7	34.3	41.0	36.6	26.7	28.4	39.4	48.8	22.6	22.1	35.8	38.1
Not reported	5.1	3.6	5.1	3.5	2.3	5.0	6.8	4.7	5.9	0.1	4.8	3.4	5.6	2.7
Median income (dollars)[3]	20,697	28,162	21,095	29,132	22,484	28,389	18,133	25,272	21,621	34,850	16,985	22,932	21,121	30,467

X Not applicable. - Represents zero.
[1]Includes the three family types—joint step-adoptive, joint biological-step-adoptive, and unknown—for which data are not shown separately in this table.
[2]The income intervals are as follows:

Interval	1980	1985
Low	Under $15,000	Under $20,000
Middle	$15,000-24,999	$20,000-34,999
High	$25,000 or more	$35,000 or more

The after-inflation values of the 1980 and 1985 intervals are comparable, to the extent possible, given the limitations of the intervals available on the survey form.
[3]For the median computations, the universe was restricted to families with reported incomes.
Source: Current Population Survey.

higher instability of the first marriages of women and men with lower education.[11]

Labor Force Participation of Parents

The proportion of married-couple families with children in which both parents were in the labor force increased from 41.2 percent in 1980 to 46.0 percent in 1985 (see table C). Concomitantly, the proportion of such families in which only the father was in the labor force dropped from 54.7 percent to 49.5 percent over the same period. One can see that a significant milestone was passed between 1980 and 1985. In 1980, only the father was in the labor force in the majority of married-couple families with children (54.7 percent). By 1985, this was no longer true: it was only slightly less common for both parents to be in the labor force (46.0 percent) than it was for the father alone to be in the labor force (49.5 percent).

The proportion of married-couple families with children in which only the mother was in the labor force rose slightly between 1980 and 1985, while the proportion in which neither parent was in the labor force did not change significantly. In 1985, 2 out of every 100 married-couple families with children had only the mother in the labor force, while neither parent was in the labor force in about 3 out of every 100 married-couple families with children.

Families which contain only stepchildren were the most likely of the family types to have mothers in the labor force. In 1985, mothers were in the labor force in 58.7 percent of biological mother-stepfather, married-couple families. This higher-than-average labor force participation rate by mothers in families with stepfathers may be related to 1) the likelihood of their being in the labor force before their current marriage, suggesting an attachment to their work life and a desire to continue working; 2) an unwillingness to be economically dependent on a man after the relationship with their child's father did not work out; 3) some feeling of obligation to help support their biological child; and 4) economic necessity (see the income section below). Davis (1984) argues that fear of divorce and of subsequent impoverishment has led to a general increase in labor force participation among American women with children. One might expect that if this, in fact, were true, the fear would be greatest among those women who had already experienced a disrupted relationship.

In biological father-stepmother families, the stepmothers also are more likely to be in the labor force than the average wife in a married-couple family with children (58.7 percent versus 47.8 percent). These women may not be as likely to feel compelled or to want to stay at home with their stepchildren; or the children may be older, allowing more time for labor force participation by both spouses.

Family Income

The majority of stepfamilies are at an economic disadvantage relative to other family types. Median family income for all married-couple family households with children in 1985 was $28,162 (see table C).[12] The family type with the lowest median family income was the joint biological-step family. These families had a median family income of only $22,932. The second lowest median income belonged to stepfather-biological mother families. Their median family income in 1985 was $25,272.

Strikingly, stepmother-biological father families had the highest median family income in 1985— $34,850.[13] While instances in which the father retains custody of a child from a previous marriage are still quite unusual, they are more likely to occur when the father's financial circumstances are good. But causality is not at all clear.[14]

Conclusion

Two-parent families are becoming increasingly heterogeneous. The number of families with just biological children (under age 18)—the so-called "traditional family"—dropped between 1980 and 1985. During the same 5-year period, however, both the number of stepparent-only families (family types 3 and 4) and the number of joint biological-step families (family type 5) increased. As families involving step situations increase, so do the complexities with which members of these families must deal. Children, parents, and other family members are having to adapt to varied family structures ever more frequently. If these alternative family types become embedded enough in our social structure, society will define roles for the family members.

---

[12] Family income was transcribed from information first obtained at the time a household entered the Current Population Survey and updated when it reentered the survey. For about one-quarter of the sample the data are for the year ending June 30, while for the other quarters the data are for the years ending March 31, April 30, and May 31, respectively. Income is based on the respondent's estimate of total family money income in broad, fixed income levels. Previous research has shown that the use of broad income levels to record money income tends to reduce the rate of nonreporting while increasing the likelihood that the amounts reported will be significantly understated as compared with results from more detailed questions.

[13] The difference between the median family incomes of stepmother-biological father families ($34,850) and joint biological-adoptive families ($30,867) is significant at the 86-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

[14] Widowhood may have accounted for some of the fathers in biological father-stepmother families retaining custody of their children. These fathers have a higher mean age than the average father in a married-couple-with-children family. Also, since they are still in their prime working years, we can reasonably expect that these older than average fathers will have higher than average incomes.

The families we have focused on here—stepfather-biological mother and joint biological-step—represent the vast majority of stepfamilies and account for most of the recent growth in stepfamilies. The formation of these types of families usually involves premarital pregnancy and birth and subsequent marriage and/or divorce and remarriage. These are behaviors that more frequently occur to people who have relatively low educational attainment and low incomes, characteristics that are carried over to the stepfamilies they form. Thus, in addition to the burdens of dealing with complex familial relationships, many stepfamilies must also cope with social and economic disadvantages as well.

The recent striking growth in stepfamilies has left little time for individuals, families, and society to develop ways of coping with problems associated with living in families where step relationships exist. Researchers are beginning to study more intensely the characteristics of stepfamilies as their numbers increase and they distinguish themselves from other families in their uniquenesses.

Technical Note

A specific child-type was assigned to almost every child by applying the Moorman and Hernandez method as follows. The first set of procedures matched data from the record of each own child in the household with data from the birth history of either the householder (for female householders) or the householder's wife. Required data from the birth history, which lists the biological children ever born to the female householder or to the male householder's spouse, included the child's birth date (from which age was calculated), sex, and whether or not the child currently lived with its mother. If the age and sex of an own child listed on the household roster corresponded exactly with the age and sex of a child listed on the birth history as present in the household, then the own child was classified as the biological child of the woman.

For some of the remaining own children in the sample, a perfect match to a child listed on the birth history was not possible, because the birth history was missing data pertaining to the child's sex, presence in the household, or both. If the age of an own child was identical to the age of a child listed on the birth history, but data on the child's sex and/or presence in the household were missing from the birth history, then that child was designated to be a biological child of that woman.

The next tier of matching was performed on the remaining unmatched own children under age 18 in the household, if there also were unmatched children under age 18 on the birth history who were reported to be present in the household. The oldest unmatched child (under age 18) on the birth history was designated to be the same child as the oldest unmatched own child (under age 18) in the household. That child was designated as having a biological mother in the household. This procedure was repeated until there were no more unmatched children on the birth history (who were listed as present in the household), or no more unmatched own children in the household, or both.

A possible source of a failure to match an own child to a child listed on the birth history arises from the need to impute the number of children ever born, when it was missing from the birth history. In order to account for the possibility that the imputed value was too small, all as yet unmatched own children in the household were designated as being the biological children of a mother, if the mother had an imputed value for her number of children ever born.

An own child who was still unmatched to a child on the birth history at this point in the matching procedure might be unmatched because birth history information was collected only for a maximum of five births. Therefore, when the number of children ever born exceeded five, the additional children ever born were distributed equally across the span of years separating the fourth child from the youngest child, and the number of these children who were under age 18 was then estimated. This estimated number of own children (under age 18) in the household was then designated as living with their biological mother.

In order to identify step and adoptive mothers as well as type of father, birth dates of own children were compared to their parents' marriage date.[15] Biological children of the mother who were born after the parents' marriage were designated as having a biological father, while those born before the parents' marriage were designated as having a stepfather. Own children not living with a biological mother who were born before the parents' marriage were designated as living with their biological father and their stepmother if that father had been married previously. Children not living with a biological mother who were born after the parents' current marriage were designated as living with two adoptive parents.

Moorman and Hernandez (1989) evaluated this methodology by comparing their results for children from the June 1980 CPS with data on the distribution of children by parent-type from the 1981 Child Health Supplement to the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). They conclude that "Overall . . . the results from the CPS and corresponding results from the NHIS are generally similar."

[15] Birth dates of own children ages 14 to 17 were compared to their parents' marriage date. For own children under age 14 with an exact age match, birth date from the mother's birth history was compared to the marriage date. This was necessary because only age (not birth date) was collected on the survey form for children under age 14. If no birth date was available, age from the child's record was compared to the calculated duration of the parents' marriage.

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Appendix. Source and Reliability of Estimates 37

Source of data 37

Reliability of estimates 37

CPS undercoverage results from missed housing units and missed persons within sample households. Compared to the level of the 1980 decennial census, overall CPS undercoverage is about 7 percent. CPS undercoverage varies with age, sex, and race. Generally, undercoverage is larger for males than for females and larger for Blacks and other races combined than for Whites. As described previously, ratio estimation to independent age–sex–race–Hispanic population controls partially corrects for the bias due to undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates to the extent that missed persons in missed households or missed persons in interviewed households have different characteristics from those of interviewed persons in the same age–sex–race–Hispanic group. Furthermore, the independent population controls have not been adjusted for undercoverage in the 1980 census.

For additional information on nonsampling error including the possible impact on CPS data when known, refer to Statistical Policy Working Paper 3, *An Error Profile: Employment as Measured by the Current Population Survey*, Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1978 and Technical Paper 40, *The Current Population Survey: Design and Methodology*, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Sampling variability. Sampling variability is variation that occurred by chance because a sample was surveyed rather than the entire population. Standard errors are primarily measures of sampling variability, although they may include some nonsampling error. The sample estimate and its standard error enable one to construct a confidence interval, a range that would include the average result of all possible samples with a known probability. For example, if all possible samples were surveyed under essentially the same general conditions and using the same sample design, and if an estimate and its standard error were calculated from each sample, then approximately 90 percent of the intervals from 1.6 standard errors below the estimate to 1.6 standard errors above the estimate would include the average result of all possible samples.

A particular confidence interval may or may not contain the average estimate derived from all possible samples. However, one can say with specified confidence that the interval includes the average estimate calculated from all possible samples.

Standard errors may also be used to perform hypothesis testing, a procedure for distinguishing between population parameters using sample estimates. The most common type of hypothesis appearing in this report is that the population parameters are different. An example of this would be comparing one person households to married-couple households.

Tests may be performed at various levels of significance, where a significance level is the probability of concluding that the characteristics are different when, in fact, they are the same. Unless otherwise qualified, all statements of comparison in the text have passed a hypothesis test at the 0.10 level of significance or better. This means that the absolute value of the estimated difference between characteristics is greater than or equal to 1.6 times the standard error of the difference.

For a discussion of the computation of standard errors and for examples of their application, please see the individual reports referenced in each section of this report.

Reliability of divorce rates. Data on the number of divorces are from administrative records supplied by the individual states to NCHS and are not subject to sampling error.

Comparability of data. Data obtained from the CPS and other sources are not entirely comparable. This results from differences in interviewer training and experience and in differing survey processes. This is an example of nonsampling variability not reflected in the standard errors. Use caution when comparing results from different sources.

Caution should also be used when comparing estimates in this report, which reflect 1980 census-based population controls, with estimates for 1980 and earlier years, which reflect 1970 census-based population controls. This change in population controls had relatively little impact on summary measures such as means, medians, and percentage distributions, but did have a significant impact on levels. For example, use of 1980 based population controls results in about a 2-percent increase in the civilian noninstitutional population and in the number of families and households. Thus, estimates of levels for data collected in 1981 and later years will differ from those for earlier years by more than what could be attributed to actual changes in the population. These differences could be disproportionately greater for certain subpopulation groups than for the total population.

Since no independent population control totals for Hispanics were used before 1984, compare Hispanic estimates over time cautiously.

Note when using small estimates. Summary measures (such as medians and percentage distributions) are shown only when the base is 75,000 or greater. Because of the large standard errors involved, summary measures would probably not reveal useful information when computed on a smaller base. However, estimated numbers are shown even though the relative standard errors of these numbers are larger than those for corresponding percentages. These smaller estimates permit combinations of the categories to suit data users' needs. Take care in the interpretation of small differences. For instance, even a small amount of nonsampling error can cause a borderline difference to appear significant or not, thus distorting a seemingly valid hypothesis test.

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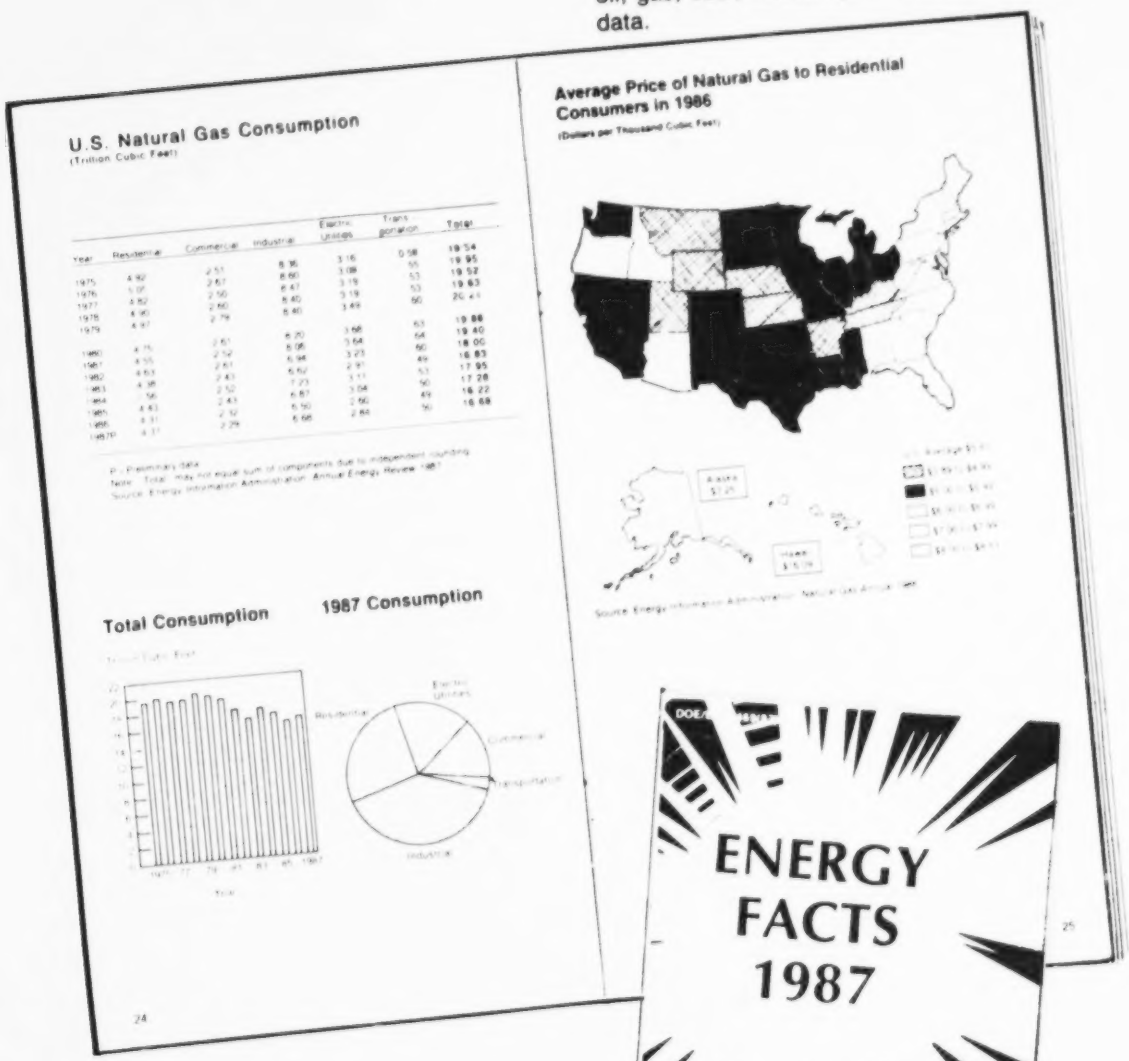

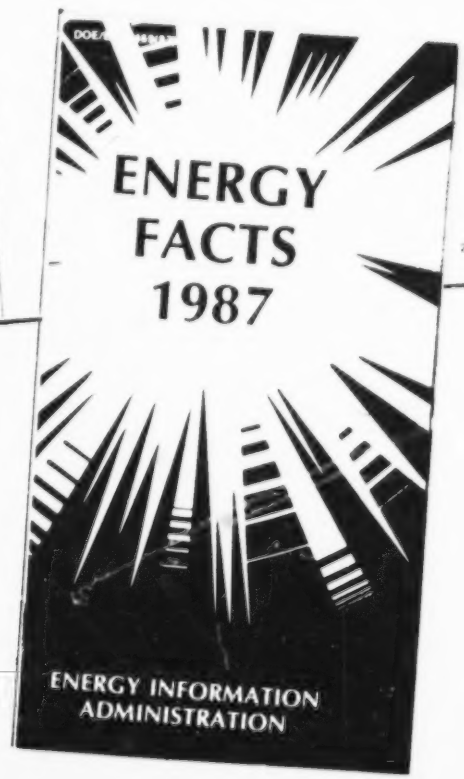

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